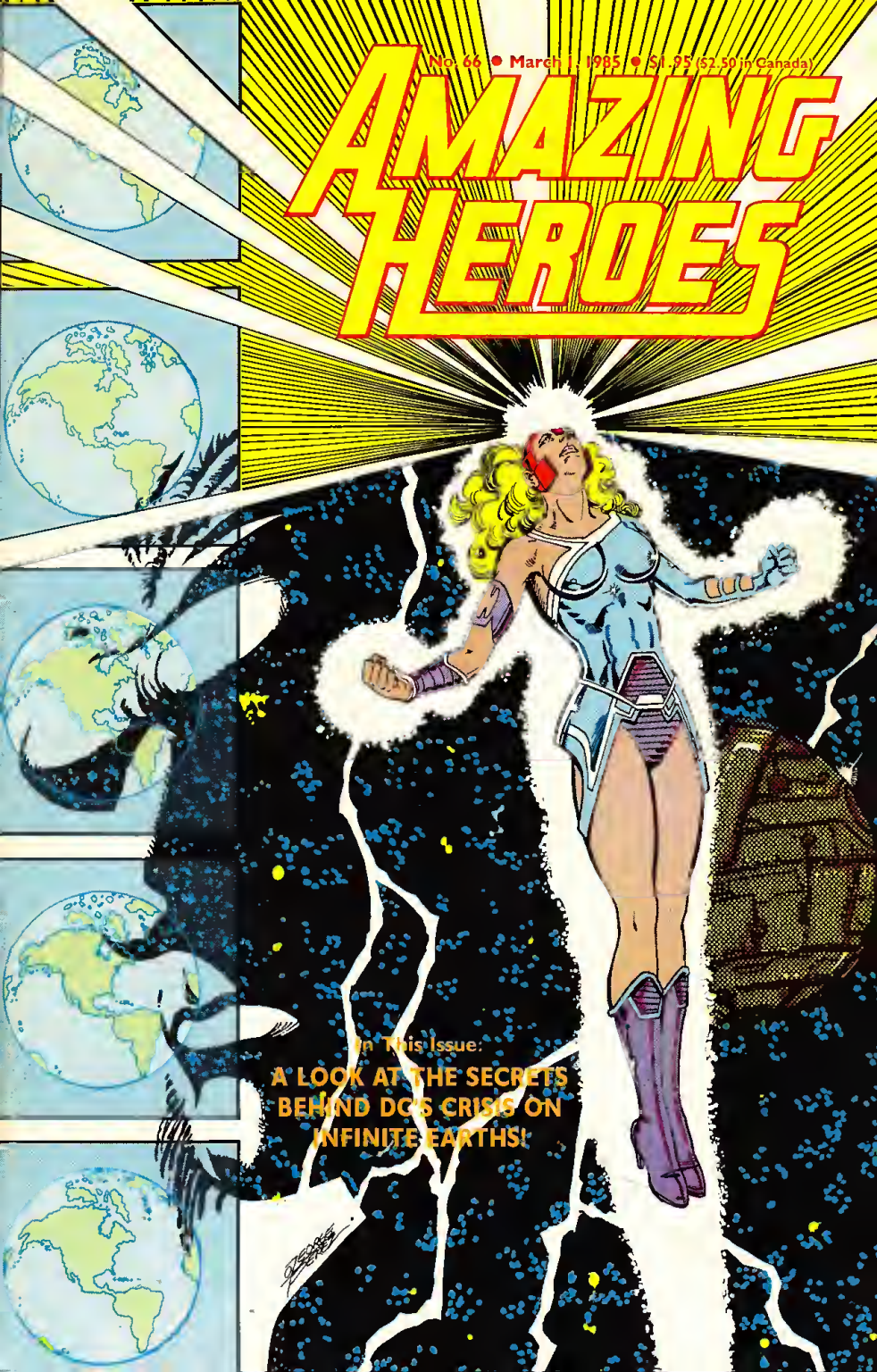


No. 66 • March 1, 1985 • \$1.95 (\$2.50 in Canada)

AMAZING HEROES



In This Issue:
**A LOOK AT THE SECRETS
BEHIND DC'S CRISIS ON
INFINITE EARTHS!**



I grew up!

But my favorite comic book didn't.

Sure I used to read comics. Just about all my friends did too. Comics were a lot of fun . . . when we were kids.

But the older I got, the more childish those comics became. The plots were the same, month after month. The artwork looked like it had been made in a factory instead of drawn in a studio. I was growing up, but the comic books I read were not.

So I stopped reading them. I left my favorite funny book behind, along with my toys and my childhood.

Then, one day, a friend told me about the new comics. Modern comics. Comics with good art. Full laser-scanned color. Magazine quality white paper. And best of all, these new comics featured new heroes, new concepts, and a new kind of commitment to excellence.

I was amazed. During the time I was gone from comics, they had grown up too. Just like I did.

Yes, I rediscovered comics. But not just any comics. I discovered Eclipse Comics. With the Eclipse logo on the cover, I can be sure that the comics I read are grown up. Just like me.



YOU'RE NOT A KID
ANYMORE.

1985 DC Comics, Inc.



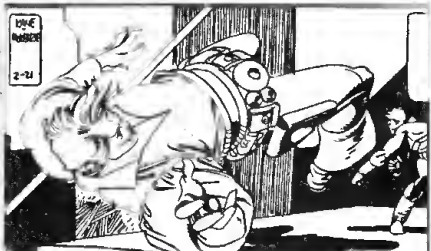
PREVIEW: Mark Waid talks to Marv Wolfman, George Perez, and Bob Greenberger about *Crisis on Infinite Earths* on page 23.

1985 Marvel Comics Group



HERO HISTORY: Marvel's Dracula chronicles, as retold by Lou Mougin on page 32.

© 1981 United Feature Syndicate



STAR HAWKS: The conclusion of the penultimate Star Hawks story! It's on page 7.

Page 6: EDITORIAL

"Foul-Ups, Bleeps, and Blunders"
by Kim Thompson

Page 7: STAR HAWKS

"Showdown on Kumal" concludes.
by Gil Kane and Roger McKenzie

Page 12: NEWSFLASHES

News from all over.
by J. Collier

Page 15: COMING DISTRACTIONS

Coming comics from Feb. 16-28.
by J. Collier

Page 23: BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

A preview of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.
by Mark Waid

Page 32: THE VAMPIRE STRIKES BACK!

Dracula at Marvel.
by Lou Mougin

Page 46: THE COMIC BOOK HEROES

Chapter III: The Superman Mythos.
by Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones

Page 51: THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

Captains Courageous.
by Lust, Johnson, and Mougin

Page 59: COMICS IN REVIEW

Pressbutton, Conqueror of the Barren Earth, Nexus, Gargoyle, and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.
by R.A. Jones

Page 61: AMAZING READERS

More corresponding correspondence.
by The Readers

Cover illustration by George Perez. Colored by Perez/Wim/Hambone; separations by Mr. Hambone.
Art © 1985 DC Comics, Inc.

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NEWSFLASHES

POTPOURRI

COMING DISTRACTIONS

STAR WARS

AMAZING READERS

COMICS IN REVIEW

ALL THIS AND MORE
IN EACH AND EVERY
BI-WEEKLY ISSUE OF

AMAZING HEROES

That's right! Every issue of **Amazing Heroes** features the most comprehensive and the most entertaining look at comics—both current and past!

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"Coming Distractions" gives you the most accurate listing of upcoming comics...

"Comics in Review" tells you which comics to check out and which to avoid...

"Top 100" tells you which comics are the most popular with your fellow readers... "Amazing Readers" allow you to sound off about your joys and your beefs, about **AH** and anything else... and **Star Wars** provides you with the finest in comic-strip adventure!

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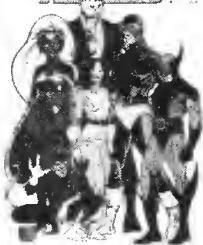
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THIS ISSUE: An exclusive illustrated interview with The X-Men's New Supersize Artist: PAUL SMITH!

AMAZING HEROES
No 12 \$4.50



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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Amazing Heroes	45, 10	Harrier Comics	37
Comics Interview	58	Image International (b.cover)	
DC Comics	29	Madison Comics	62, 64
Eclipse	1, 31, 51	Marvel Comics	22
F&S Books	18-17	Ocean Comics	41
First Comics	15	Renegade	18

FOUL-UPS, BLEEPs, AND BLUNDERS

Well, the 1985 Preview Issue of **AMAZING HEROES** has come and gone, and response to it has been most gratifying. So gratifying, in fact, that beginning this summer, the **AH** Preview Issue will become a twice-annual phenomenon.

Why? Quite simply, I realized with very few exceptions, almost no creators (or publishers) are able to predict more than six months into the future—and thus, by the time the summer and autumn roll around, an annual Preview Issue becomes hopelessly dated. Moreover, the Summer is a period of such intense activity it seemed a pity not to be able to cover it—so presto! What's another ulcer for Mr. Thompson and Mr. Mason, anyway?

On top of this, I'm delighted to announce that the creator of one of the five top color comics currently being published (my opinion) has agreed to execute the cover for that issue. One clue: the entry for his title is almost dead certain to be the final one for the issue!

Incidentally, some people have complained to me that a few of the items in the Preview Issue reveal too much about the upcoming series. You know what? New editor Art Cover and I think they're absolutely right! So we will be making sure that while the articles will be as in-depth and as accurate as always, our writers won't go quite as far overboard in announcing the exact plans for the next 38 issues. Fair enough?

Now that all this excitement has been coped with, a few corrections to some grievous errors that have slipped into recent issues.

Last issue, for instance, the table of contents listed John Bolton's superb Black Dragon cover as having been drawn by George Perez and being copyright DC Comics, Inc. Smart readers will already have figured out that this issue's copyright notice accidentally got shoved back an issue. I was tempted to copyright this issue's cover to the Dragon team to redress the balance, but thought better of it. Anyway, for the record, the cover to **AH** #65 was executed by John Bolton, and is copyright © 1985 Chris Claremont and John Bolton.

Bob Schreck, of Comico, informs me that contrary to what was written in the *Comico Bijou* entry in the 1985 Preview Issue, Bill Cucinotta's "Pain" series is not part of the Comico inventory, and may yet show up in some entirely different comic, from some entirely different publisher.

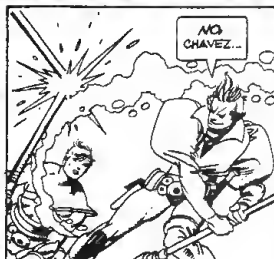
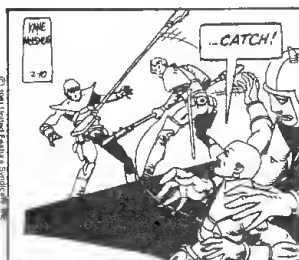
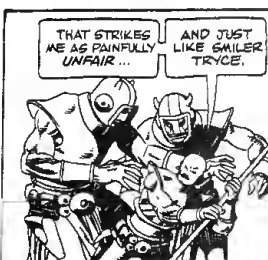
Harlan Ellison informs us that at least a few people have taken the *Vegenauts* item, which credited him as writer of a new series for Fantagraphics Books, seriously, and he has had to field some peculiar questions. Come on, guys! Do we have to spell it out? That item, by the effervescent Heidi MacDonald, was a joke, yay-oh-kay-ee. So was the *Tales of a Potato* one, (*Tales of the Beanworld* was serious, though—and I'm still not sure about "Mazing Man!")

And, of course, our apologies to the companies and creators whose titles were missed this time around, such as Steve Gallacci's *Albedo* and Peter Hsu's *Quadrant*. Due to the problems of transatlantic communication, Great Britain was hardest hit, with Harrier and Marvel U.K.'s entire output slipping between the slats. As ever, we promise to do better next time.

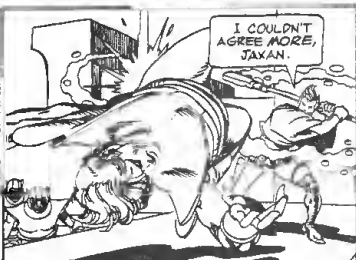
Next issue, I will once again abuse my position of authority and prominence and list the best 20 (yes, 20!) comics currently being published. And in #68... now, it's indescribable. Just be there, okay?

—KIM

STAR HAWKS

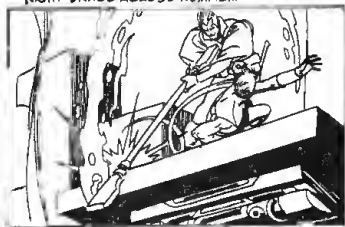


THE MACABRE GRIN DOES NOT...CANNOT...
LEAVE SMILER'S LIPS AS HE CLOSES IN
FOR THE KILL...

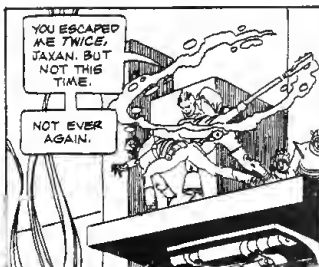


STAR HAWKS

NIGHT DRAGS ACROSS KUMAL...



...BUT DEATH RUSHES TOWARD REX...



YOU ESCAPED ME TWICE, JAXAN. BUT NOT THIS TIME.

NOT EVER AGAIN.



I'M NOT RUNNING, TRYCE. I NEVER DID.



I'D FORGED AN EMPIRE, JAXAN. ONE YOU STAR HAWKS SHATTERED.

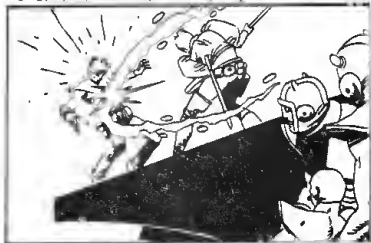


YOU TOOK EVERYTHING
EVERYTHING EXCEPT MY HATE.

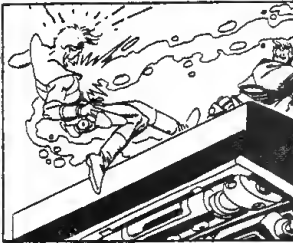


I STILL CARRY THE SCARS.

OVER A LAKE OF BURNING ACID, A HEATED BATTLE.



...COMES TO A CHILLING END.



REX!

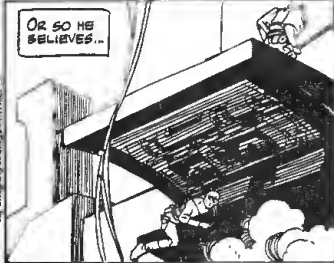
SWIGER TRYCE TURNS... AND IF POSSIBLE, THE PERPETUAL GAZDONIC GRIN BEGINS TO WIDEN ACROSS HIS THIN LIPS.



REX JAXAN HAS FALLEN TO HIS DEATH.



OR SO HE BELIEVES...



TRYCE, YOU MURDERED MY BEST FRIEND. IF I EVER GET MY HANDS ON YOU—

YOU WON'T CHAVEZ.



REX JAXAN IS DEAD... AND YOU'RE NEXT.



THE KILLING ENDS HERE, TRYCE. HERE AND NOW.

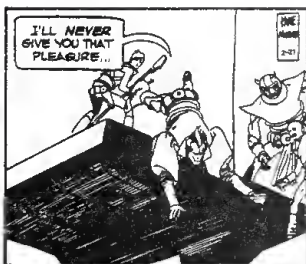
STAR HAWKS



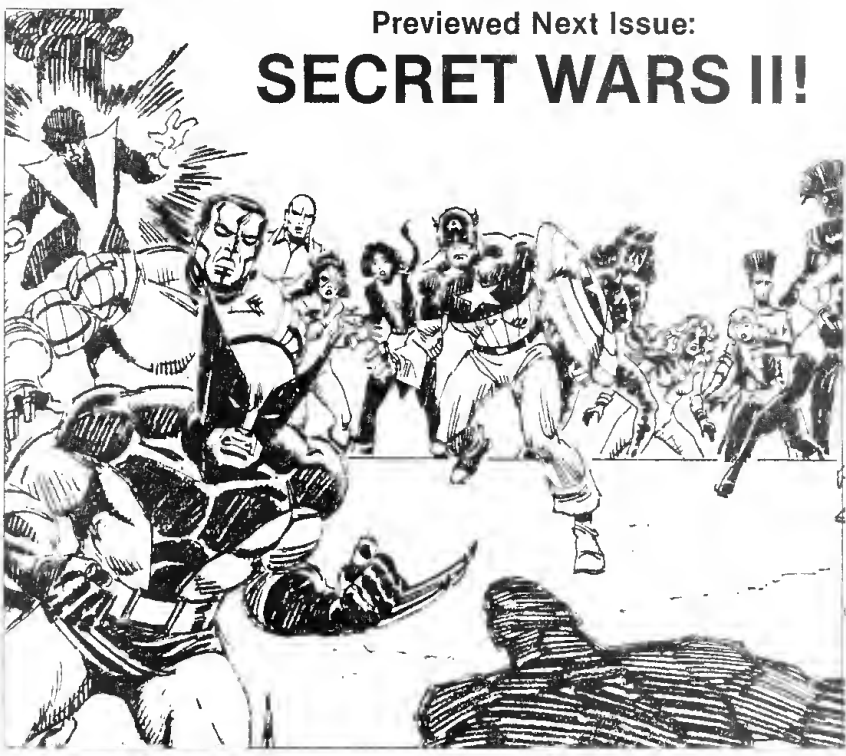
IN A BACKWATER STAR SYSTEM ON A DESOLATE WORLD CALLED KURAL--



STAR HAWKS



Previewed Next Issue: SECRET WARS II!





© A. Moore/G. Leach/Quality/Eclipse

ECLIPSE
COMICS

NEWSFLASHES

CAPTAIN MARVEL REPRINTED: *The Life of Captain Marvel* will consist of five issues, 48 pages at \$2.00 each, and direct-sales only. The series will reprint *Captain Marvel* #25 through #34, *Iron Man* #55, and *Marvel Feature* #12, plus a five-page sequence featuring Moondragon from *Daredevil* #105. There will be some new material in the series, such as new splash pages done by creator JIM STARLIN, as well as new front and back covers. The series is intended as a companion volume to the reprint series *Warlock*, and to the graphic novel *The Death of Captain Marvel*.

RAWHIDE RETURNS: *Rawhide Kid* is a four-issue Limited Series debuting in April. BILL MANTLO will write it, and HERB TRIMPE pencil it. The first issue is inked by JOHN SEVERIN, and the second and subsequent issues will be inked by GERRY TALAOC. JOHN BUSCEMA will pencil the covers. The series concerns the Kid's aging, and his wanting to retire his Rawhide persona.

MARVEL MISCELLANIA: *Fred Hembeck Destroys the Marvel Universe* will ship in early March, and it features pencils by FRED HEMBECK and inks by VINNIE COLLETTA. It will be direct-sales only, 48 pages, and will cost

Frank Brunner's *Seven Samurai* finds a publisher.



Captain Marvel by Jim Starlin. A new reprint series.

\$1.25. The plot revolves around an order by Marvel Editor-in-Chief JIM SHOOTER to bump off everyone in the Marvel Universe. This book, incidentally, ships the same week as *Secret Wars II* #1. . . . The first issue of *Swashbucklers*, by BILL MANTLO and JACKSON GUICE, has been delayed due to production problems, and has been pushed back to a March release, instead of the originally intended January one. The book is a bi-monthly, \$1.50 Epic Comic. . . . Come February, Marvel Comics will release *Sectaurs, Warriors of Symbion*. The bi-monthly title, written by BILL MANTLO, and drawn by MARK TEXEIRA and JOE DELBEATO, is based on the newest series of action figures from Coleco. According to Editor BOB BUDIANSKY, the series will combine science fiction, sorcery, intrigue, and action. . . . Epic's *Elfquest* reprints will begin in April. This will be Epic's third series to be offered to both the direct-sales and the newsstand market, the other two being *Dreadstar* and *Company and Groo*. The *Elfquest* books will be on Mando apper, retailing for 75 cents, and will include new artwork by WENDY PINI. . . . FRANK MILLER will write a story in *Daredevil* #219 that JOHN BUSCEMA will draw. . . . *New Mutants* #28 will conclude the origin of Legion, and will guest star Magneto. . . . Sasquatch dies in *Alpha Flight* #23. . . . ALAN ZELENETZ will write the one-shot *Official Handbook of the Conan Universe*. . . . The total destruction of the

NEWSFLASHES NEWSFLASHES

Savage Land will occur in **Avengers #256**. . . Shaman of Alpha Flight guest stars in **Iron Man #195**.

AMERICAN NEBULA!: The science-fiction writers' association has nominated HOWARD CHAYKIN's **American Flag!** for a prestigious Nebula Award. The category is "best short story of 1984," and the second, third, and fourth stories in **Flag!** got the nod. These stories compose issues #4-12.

FIRST MISCELLANIA: With **Grimjack #15**, RICK OLIVER, the editor on **Nexus**, will also become the editor of that book. . . There will be fewer "Munden's Bar" back-ups in **Grimjack** this year, as full-length main features will be more prevalent. . . With **Starslayer #31**, JON EDDINGS will become the new permanent penciller. MARK NELSON will continue to ink. . . WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS, of **Journey** fame, will draw the "Munden's Bar" in **Grimjack #13**. . . The "**Hard Times**" graphic novel, which will reprint the first three issues of **American Flag!**, will run 100 pages for \$11.95.

GERMAN FIRST: **Warp** and **Grimjack** have found their way into syndication in a German

Section, **Warriors of Symbion** is a new toy series from Marvel.



1985 Seven Towns, Ltd.

© 1985 Deluxe Comics



Dave Cockrum's Skyhawk—a new character upcoming in **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents**.

comics magazine. The reprinting will be monthly, and will pick up with both series' first issues. However, eventually, the episodes that appeared when **Grimjack** was a back-up feature in **Starslayer** will also find themselves reprinted in Germany. Also, the computer-produced comic, **Shatter**, will be serialized in **Big K**, a magazine published by IPC, the British publisher who also puts out **2000 A.D.** In other First news, Sargon, late of **Warp**, will be appearing in **Starslayer #33** and **#34**, and the First Comics offices will be moving from Evanston, Illinois right on into Chicago itself.

SAMUROID, FINALLY: FRANK BRUNNER's long-delayed graphic novel, **The Seven Samuroid**, will go on sale in March. Delayed due to the collapse of Pacific Comics, the intended publisher, the book will be printed by Image International, in New Zealand. The volume will run 64 pages, and will retail for \$6.95.

ECLIPSE ANTHOLOGIES: Eclipse will be publishing horror and science-fiction anthologies to take the place of Pacific's late **Twisted Tales** and **Alien Worlds**. The titles of

the Eclipse incarnations are: *Alien Encounters* and *Tales of Terror*. Although there has been another comic titled *Alien Encounters*, Eclipse has purchased the name, and will begin the numbering with #1. KEN STEACY designed the logos for both books, and the cover to the first issue of *Encounters* is by JOE CHIODO. As for other artists and writers Eclipse has lined up, there are commitments from BO HAMPTON, KEN STEACY, ALAN MOORE, BUZZ DIXON, CHARLES WAGNER, LILO EHRLINGER, JOE CHIODO, THOM ENRIQUEZ, and TOM YEATES. Both books will be 32 pages, bi-monthly, for \$1.75. There's no release schedule yet, but Eclipse is aiming for late Spring.

ECLIPSE PICKS UP SUN RUNNERS: *Sun Runners*, by ROGER MCKENZIE and PAT BRODERICK, has been picked up by Eclipse, and this series was also published by Pacific until that company's sudden demise. The 20 pages of the lead feature are completed, and the only thing holding up the works is the back-up feature. Originally, the feature was to be McKenzie and PAUL SMITH's "Mike Mahogany," but Smith overcommitted himself to the point of having to drop the back-up, Eclipse Editor-in-Chief CAT YRONWODE said. Yronwode added that the feature might continue, only with a different artist—or it might be a completely new feature.

ECLIPSE MISCELLANIA: The "Marvelman" comic will retail for 75 cents, making it the most inexpensive direct-sales-only color book ever offered. The book's schedule is still tentative, so no release date is schedule... MITCH SCHAUER will become the new permanent penciller on *DNAgents* sometime soon... MIKE HARRIS will pencil *Aztec Ace* #14... MIKE GUSTOVICH will ink regular artist DAN DAY's pencils on *Aztec Ace* #12 and #13... *Masked Man* #3 will contain a back-up feature, "Security Man," by ERIC YARBER, and drawn by GLEN JOHNSON and KELLEY JONES. This story will be Johnson's first published work. *Detectives, Inc.*, by DON MCGREGOR and MARSHALL ROGERS, will be released as a two-issue "micro-series," set to begin in April. The issues will be released only one week apart. Each issue will be 32 pages, for \$1.75.

DELUXE NEWS: KEITH GIFFEN will be doing the Mentor strip in *Tales of T.H.U.N.D.E.R.* For the first two issues, DON MCGREGOR will be writing that strip, and it will concern child abuse, and kidnapping children for prostitution. In the future, Mentor will consistently deal



with social themes. In *Tales* #2 and #3, Giffen will contribute plots and pencils to the Lightning strip, and beginning with #4, ERNIE COLON will become the regular penciller, and RICK BRYANT will continue to ink the series.

Tales will debut at \$1.50 with 32 pages, rather than the originally-planned \$2.00, 48-page format. This is because the Iron Maiden strip has been temporarily shelved. STEVE PERRY and BOB MCLEOD will handle the Dynamo strip in issues #3, #4, and #5, and then Giffen and Bryant will become the artistic team.

In issue #5 of *Wally Wood's T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, ROGER MCKENZIE will take over as the writer of the lead team strip, and in issues #3 and #4, "The Return of the Iron Maiden" will be featured. Also, in these two issues, a subplot is begun that will climax in issue #8, in which the Agents will leave the United Nations, gaining another dozen super-agents in the process.

HARRIER NEWS: Harrier's new title, *Swiftsure*, which will include stories and artwork by MARTIN LOCK, KEVIN HOPGOOD, LEW STRINGER, DAVE HARWOOD, and more, will boast an introduction by ALAN MOORE in the first issue. It goes on sale in April. Meanwhile, *Conqueror* continues on its regular schedule, adding STEPHEN BASKERVILLE and KEVIN HOPGOOD to its roster of creators. Also scheduled is *Conqueror Universe*, a spin-off title, which will feature a pencils-only art job by TONY O'DONNELL; editor/publisher MARTIN LOCK writes, as usual.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S

Elnic

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ISSUE #1 ON SALE IN FEBRUARY

THE FIRST CHOICE KEEPS GETTING BETTER!

FIRST
COMICS
COUNT ON US.

Coming in APRIL From FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Magnificent Full-Color Funny-Animal Graphic Novel Offered to U.S.!

Fantagraphics Books will be distributing *The Beast is Dead*, a magnificent full-color, hardbound graphic novel published in France. Entirely written in English, the 92-page graphic novel chronicles World War II using a cast of wolves, bears, dogs, rabbits, cows, monkeys, etc.

The Beast is Dead, originally published in 1944, is drawn in full process color by classic French artist CALVO, in a magnificently detailed style that recalls '40s Disney cartoon features. The story, by VICTOR DANCETTE, is a venomous chronicle of the war years. The result is a breathtaking epic—one of the strangest and most beautiful publications of the year! This book has to be seen to be believed... and Fantagraphics Books is selling it at an incredibly low price considering the production values, art quality, and page count!

Includes a foreword by ALBERT UDERZO, writer/artist of the popular *Asterix* series!

Warning: A limited amount of these volumes are available, and it is entirely possible that stock will be exhausted by the first wave of orders. Don't miss your chance to sell this prestigious collector's item!

The Beast is Dead, 92 pages, full-color, hardcover. Distributed by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. \$12.95 (Canada: \$16.95).



WAY-OUT COMICS FOR WAY-OUT PEOPLE!



Peter Bagge Serves Up 32 Screwball Pages Of His NEAT STUFF!

From the wilds of New York comes Fantagraphics Books' companion magazine to *Love and Rockets*: **Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff!**

Bagge, already famous for his contributions to *Weirdo* (which he edits) and other newswave productions, here serves up 32 pages of hilarious commentary on the modern life we lead. Included is the "Girly Girl" saga ("She's got her own special brand of humor!"); "Minimum Wage Love"; "Ugly Is In!"; "The Goon in the Moon Constructs a Friend"; the familial escapades of "The Bradleys"; a set of riotous "baseball cards" on the back cover; and, as a change of pace, the touching psychological study "Sometimes I Think I'm Going Crazy."

Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff will appeal to the hip crowd that enjoys *Love and Rockets*, *Weirdo*, and similar more mature magazine titles.

Note: Peter Bagge's *Neat Stuff* carries the advisory "Recommended for Mature Readers."

Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff #1, 32 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. \$1.95. (Canada: \$2.50).



Distribution of Retail Bags Postponed Until May

Fantagraphics Books has postponed the distribution of the promotional retail bags originally scheduled for release in January, 1985, until May 1985. This delay will allow the bags to carry the logo and artwork for the upcoming *Mechanics* color mini-series, also scheduled for release in May. Fantagraphics Books will also use the extra time now available to find a more efficient way to distribute the bags, a way in which the bags can reach more retailers than were reached with the previously released *Dalgoda* bags.

Artwork for these two new bags will include a *Mechanics* illustration by JAIME HERNANDEZ, logos for both *Love and Rockets* and *Mechanics*, a *Dalgoda* illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE, and the *Dalgoda* logo.

Retailers who received the *Dalgoda* bags reported increased sales as a result. Fantagraphics Books expects this set of bags to be even more effective as it helps to promote two color comics instead of just one.



1984 Jaime Hernandez

JOURNEY #19: The Solitary!

Frontiersman Wolverine MacAlislaire and poet Elmer Allyn Kraft are trekking across Michigan in search of the settlement known as New Hope. Just as their journey nears an end, the two come face-to-face with the hermit called The Solitary. Is he friend or foe? Only creator WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBES knows—and he ain't telling!

Journey #19, 32 pages.
Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc.
Shipping in early April.
\$2.00. (Canada: \$2.50).



1985 William Messner-Loebes

LOVE AND ROCKETS #12: Rocky and Fumble Star!

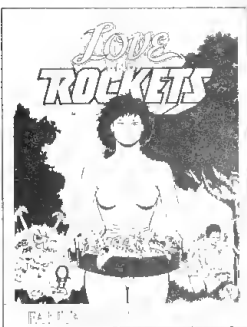
The outer-space hijinx of JAIME HERNANDEZ's "Rocky and Fumble" strip are promoted to full-length story in *Love and Rockets* #12. Not as well-known as the "Mechanics" and "Locas Tambien" series, "Rocky and Fumble" has appeared in two short stories in previous *L&R*, and tells tales of a future girl and her robot with the same verve, imagination, and wackiness that Jaime puts in his other strips.

This issue also marks a new starting point for the characters of GILBERT HERNANDEZ's "Heart-break Soup" strip. Moving in new and unexpected directions, this episode will see the introduction of new characters and a new outlook for other residents of Palomar.

Retailers: Please note that *L&R* #1-6 are now SOLD OUT from Fantagraphics Books, and that distributors' supplies are dwindling. Get 'em quick—especially since May will see the premiere of the full-color *Mechanics* series, written and drawn by JAIME and colored by PAUL (Mr. K #11) RIVOCHE.

Note: *Love and Rockets* carries the advisory: Recommended for Mature Readers.

Love and Rockets #12, 32 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. \$1.95. (Canada: \$2.50).



1985 Gilbert Hernandez



1984 Jaime Hernandez

AH #70: Squadron Supreme! AH #71: Alan Moore Talks!

Amazing Heroes #70 previews the off-beat MARK GRUENWALD/BOB HALL *Squadron Supreme* series. The first half of the *Brave and the Bold* checklist. Checking in with DENIS KITCHEN of Kitchen Sink Press. The Golden Age Directory covers Plastic Man and others. The Spider-Man chapter of Jacobs and Jones's "The Comic Book Heroes." Cover feature: The Squadron Supreme.

Amazing Heroes #71 features a long interview with the Englishman who has turned comics on their ear, the prolific ALAN MOORE. Alan will talk about... *Swamp Thing*, *Marvelman*, working on *American Flagg!*, and his new projects. Part Two of the *Brave and the Bold* checklist. Part nine of the Golden Age directory. Plus the *Amazing Heroes* Top 100. Outrageous cover portrait of Moore by Swamp Thing artist STEVE BISSETTE!

Each issue also features news, letters, an editorial, a silly cover, coming comics, reviews by R.A. Jones, plus a few surprises!

Amazing Heroes #70, 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early April. \$1.95. (Canada: \$2.50).

Amazing Heroes #71, 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in late April. \$1.95. (Canada: \$2.50).



1984 Steve Bissette

COMING IN MAY: FIRST MECHANICS ISSUE, MORE!

Mechanics #1 begins the serialization of JAIME HERNANDEZ's "Mechanics" story from *Love and Rockets* #2, newly colored, with a new back-up strip, a new cover, and an introduction by ALAN MOORE.

Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1—AH's wildly successful "Preview" concept, now in its own semi-annual magazine.

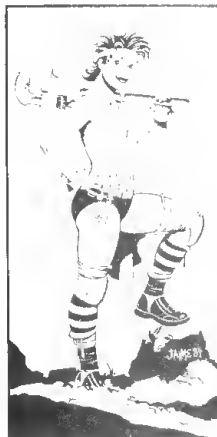
Dalgoda #6, featuring the climax of the first storyline, and the conclusion of "Grimwood's Daughter";

The Ditko Collection Volume II, featuring more classic material from the co-creator of Spider-Man.

Prince Valiant: "The Eternal Quest"—the follow-up to the superb "Lithway's Law," still full-color.

The Comics Journal #99 featuring an epic interview with FRANK MILLER.

Plus Hugo, Journey, *Amazing Heroes*, and more!



1985 Jaime Hernandez

Amazing Heroes Switches

Due to conflicting schedules, we have decided to switch the cover features on **Amazing Heroes** #67 and #68. Originally scheduled to preview FRANK MILLER's new *Batman* and *Elektra* features, #67 will now preview *Secret Wars II*, while #68, originally intended for *Secret Wars*, will display Miller's new artwork, as well as getting the "Secret Wars" preview out before the actual series premieres. We apologize for any inconvenience, but hope that the equal strength of both cover features will eliminate any problems.

ORDER FROM THESE DISTRIBUTORS IN FEBRUARY:

BUD PLANT, INC., P.O. Box 1886, Grass Valley, California 95945 (916) 273-9588

CAPITAL CITY DISTRIBUTORS, 827 Perry Street, Madison WI 53713 (608) 274-8987

DIAMOND COMIC DISTRIBUTORS, 1720 Belmont Ave., Baltimore MD 21207 (301) 298-1184

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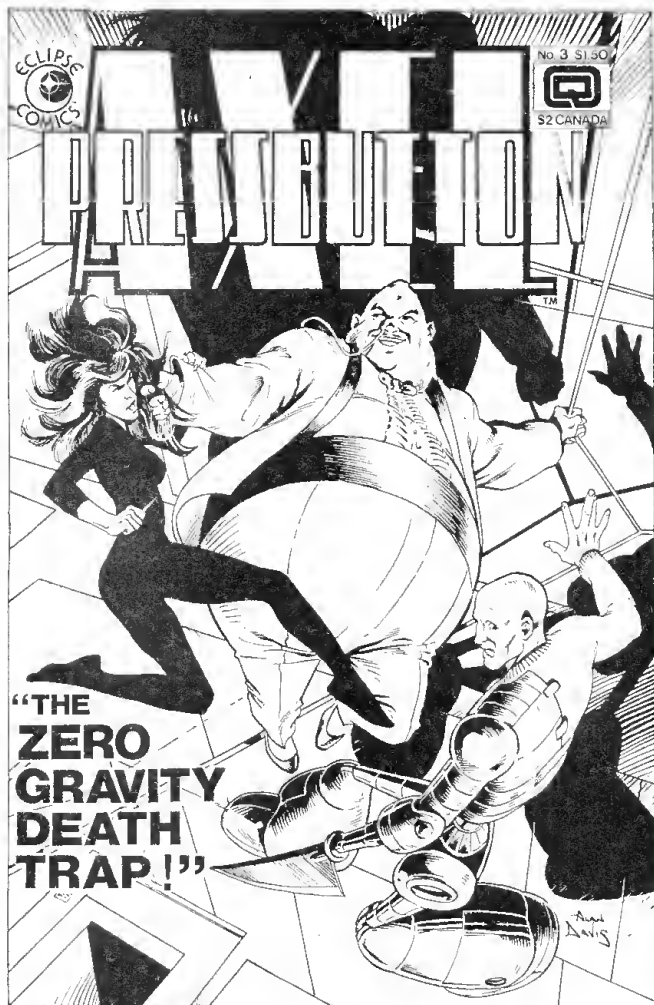


1985 Peter B'Gure



THE BRITISH INVASION

PRESSBUTTON NO. 1 SOLD OUT.



RESERVE YOUR COPY OF NO. 3 TODAY!

Coming DISTRACTIONS

February 16-28

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

BLACK ZEPPELIN #1

A science fiction anthology title, featuring the work of the late **Gene Day** and his friends.

Cover.....**Gene Day**
[\$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/15]

CEREBUS JAM #1

Featuring material by **Dave Sim** and **Garhard**, and guest artists **Will Eisner**, **Murphy Anderson**, and **Terry Austin**.

Cover.....**Bill Slankiewicz**
[\$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/15]

MS. TREE #17

"Runaway: Conclusion"

Focusing on Ms. Tree's stepson, **Mike Tree**.

Story.....**Max Allan Collins**
Art/Cover.....**Beatty & Kato**
[\$1.70 direct-sales two-color comic; ships 2/28]

NEIL THE HORSE #11

This issue is the special **Fred Astaire** tribute, and includes: **Mam'selle Poupee's** Astaire bio and appreciation; a seven-page **Mam'selle Poupee** all-dance story inked by **Warren Greenwood**; "The Return of the Magician" with art by **Don Imman**; and a preview of "Vicki Valentine" by **Bill Woggon** and **Barb Rausch**.

All Else.....**Arn Saba**
[\$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/28]

DC COMICS

ACTION COMICS #568

A stage magician's illusion goes haywire.

Story.....**Elliot S! Maggin**
Art.....**Curt Swan**
Cover.....**Bender & Ordway**
Plus a second story by **Boldman** and **Bender**: "The Amazing Matchmaker of Metropolis."

[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #46

Liberty Belle gets super powers.

Story.....**Roy Thomas**
Art.....**A. Jones & Marcos**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

AMBUSH BUG #1

Indescribable.

Story.....**Giffan & Fleming**
Art/Cover.....**Giffan & Oksner**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #32

Arion learns the 100,000-year-old secret of his past.

Story.....**Paul Kupperberg**
Art/Cover.....**Jan Duursema**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #22

The long-awaited return of **Halo**.

Story.....**Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover.....**Alan Davis**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

BLUE DEVIL #13

Guest starring **The Demon**, **Zatanna**, and **Green Lantern**.

Story.....**Mishkin & Cohn**
Art.....**Kupperberg & Martin**
Cover.....**Cullins & Martin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

DETECTIVE COMICS #551

Story.....**Doug Moench**
Art.....**Broderick & Smith**
Cover.....**Broderick & Giordano**

[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

GREEN LANTERN #189

Hai Jordan begins his hunt for the **Predator**.

Story.....**Mary Wollman**
Art/Cover.....**Joa Stalon**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

THE HUNGER DOGS

The conclusion to the **New Gods** saga.

Story/Art.....**Jack Kirby**
Inks.....**Barry & Royer**
Cover.....**Greg Thakston**
[\$5.95 direct-sales graphic novel; ships 2/26]

INFINITY, INC. #15

The final secret of **Kroma!**

Story.....**Roy Thomas**
Art.....**McFarlane & DeZuniga**
Cover.....**Dava Ross**
[\$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/26]

JONAH HEX #91

Jonah Hex becomes involved with a rodeo queen.

Story.....**Michael Fleisher**
Art.....**Gray Morrow**

Cover.....**Mark Texeira**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

NEW TEEN TITANS #9

The **New Teen Titans** and the **Old Greek Titans** battle **Thia** and **Typhon**. Also, the fate of **Lillith**.

Story.....**Marv Wolfman**
Art.....**Garcia Lopez & Tanghal**
Cover.....**George Peraz**
[\$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/26]

SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #37

The beginning of the "American Gothic" series.

Story.....**Alan Moore**
Art.....**Veitch & Totleben**
Cover.....**Blissett & Totleben**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

SGT. ROCK #401

"Visitation"

A strange brother from another planet appears.

Story.....**Robert Kanigher**
Art.....**Adrian Gonzales**
Cover.....**Joa Kubert**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

SUN DEVILS #12

That's it, boys.

Story.....**Gerry Conway**
Art.....**Jurgans & Mitchell**
Cover.....**Jurgans & Giordano**
[\$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/5]

TALENT SHOWCASE #17

The conclusion of the **Collapsar** story begun last issue.

Story.....**Tillman**
Art/Cover.....**Stan Woch**
[\$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/26]

TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #324

The mystery behind the **Dark Circle** is revealed.

Story.....**Levitz & Newall**
Art/Cover.....**Jurgans & Kesel**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

V #5

The comic with the shortest title in the world continues.

Story.....**Cary Bates**
Art.....**Infantino & DeZuniga**
Cover.....**Eduardo Barreto**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

WARLORD #94

The return of **Machiste** and **Mariah**.

Story.....**Cary Burkatt**
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/21]

WHO'S WHO: THE DEFINITIVE DIRECTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE #4

More Captains than you can shake a stick at. (If, that is, that's your idea of a truly good time.)

Editor.....Len Wein
Cover.....George Perez
[\$1.00 color comic; ships 2/26]

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #316

Cheapjack strikes again.

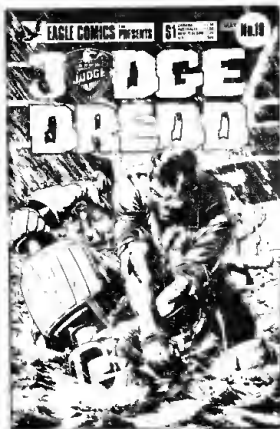
Story.....Joey Cavaliari
Art.....Stroman & Alcalá
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/28]

EAGLE COMICS

JUDGE DREDD #19

"Apocalypse War"

Story.....John Wagner
Art.....Carlos Ezquerro
Cover.....Brian Bolland
[\$1.00 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/28]



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ECLIPSE COMICS

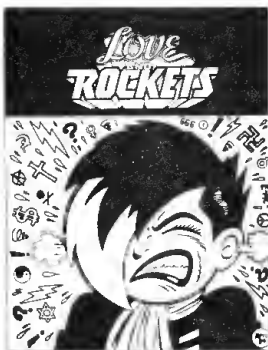
DNAGENTS #20

Story.....Merk Evanier
Art.....Howell & Blyberg
Cover.....Meugniot & Blyberg
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/19]

ZOT! #8

The Door at the Edge of the Universe is finally opened.

Story/Art.....Scott McCloud
Cover, too.....Scott McCloud
Plus: The continuation of the "Magic Box" back-up by Kurt Busiek and Dan Spiggle.
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/19]



1985 Gilbert Hernandez

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

LOVE AND ROCKETS #11

Includes the conclusion of the "Mechanics" serial by Jaime Hernandez, and an epic-length "Errata Stigmata" story by Gilbert and Marlo Hernandez.

Cover.....Gilbert Hernandez
[\$1.95 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 2/28]

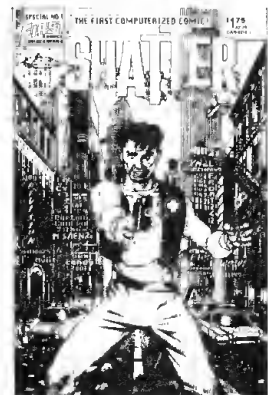
FIRST COMICS

AMERICAN FLAGG! #21

"Red Tape and Blackmail: Bullets and Ballots, Part 3"
The mayoral race gets ugly, a vicious gang war, and more.

Alli by.....Howard Chaykin
Plus: "Mark Thrust"

Story.....Alan Moore
Art/Cover.....Larry Stroman
[\$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/21]



1985 First Comics

JON SABLE, FREELANCE #25

"Homecoming, Part I"

Sable discovers the deadly secret of his parents.

Story/Art/Cover.....Mike Grell
Plus: "Shatter"

Story.....Pater Gillis
Art.....Mike Saenz
[\$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/28]

SHATTER #1

A 21st century cop in a world where everything is computerized.

Story.....Pater B. Gillis
Art/Cover.....Mike Saenz
[\$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/28]

STARSLAYER #29

"Monster"

Torin pursues his arch-enemy Black Thorn.

Story.....John Ostrander
Art/Cover.....Berta & Nelson
Black Flame: "Dark Night of the Soul"

The Black Flame and his companions venture further into the Greater Dreamlands.

Story.....Pater Gillis
Art.....Sutton & Lomax
[\$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 2/21]

HARRIER

CONQUEROR #5

"New Boots"

Beginning the "new look" for Conqueror, in a four-part serial. New costumes, new promotions, and new problems.

Story.....Martin Lock
Art/Cover.....Dave Harwood
[\$1.75 black-and-white direct-sales comic; ships in Feb.]

JUST IMAGINE

JUST IMAGINE COMICS & STORIES #12

Dixie Belle: A new heroine faces off against Sister Video.

Story.....L. David Bank
Art/Cover.....Rick Taylor

Holbrook

Story/Art.....Mark A. Nelson
Plus "Bananaman" by Jack Her-
man, Jill Thompson, and Jaff Dee;
"Communion" by Jim Bertrand; and
"Dinosaur Tales" by Mark A.
Nelson.
[\$1.50 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships Feb.]

MANUSCRIPT PRESS

COMICS REVIEW #10

Over 50 pages of current comic strips, including Spider-Man,

Gasoline Alley, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Secret Agent Corrigan, and O'Neill.

[52.00 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships Feb.]

MARVEL COMICS

□ AVENGERS #256

Ka-Zar and Shanna guest star—and it's bye-bye to the Savage Land.

Story.....Roger Stern
Art/Cover.....Buscema & Palmer
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ CONAN THE BARBARIAN #170

"Barbarian Death Song"

Story.....Michael Fleisher
Art/Cover.....John Buscema
Inks.....Armando Gil
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ THE DEFENDERS #144

Valkyrie Vs. Moondragon.

Story.....Peter Gillis
Art.....Don Perlin & Kim DeMulder
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ DR. WHO #7

"The Collector" and "Dreamers of Death"

Story.....Steve Moore
Art/Cover.....Dave Gibbons
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/26]

□ FANTASTIC FOUR #279

The Baxter Building is destroyed, and the FF go to Latveria.

Story/Art/Cover.....John Byrne
Inks.....Jerry Ordway
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ G.I. JOE #36

Story.....Larry Hama

Art.....Whigham & Mushynsky
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ INCREDIBLE HULK #308

"Here There Be... Demons"

Story.....Bill Mantlo
Art.....S. Buscema & Talaoc
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ IRON MAN #195

Guest starring Shaman of Alpha Flight.

Story.....Denny O'Neil
Art/Cover.....McDonnell
Inks.....Akin/Garvey
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ KULL THE CONQUEROR #10

Story.....Alan Zelenetz
Art.....J. Buscema & M. Severin
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ MARVEL TALES #176

"Once Upon a Time, There Was a Robot"

Reprinting *Spider-Man* #37.

Story.....Stan Lee
Art/Cover.....Steve Ditko
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ MOON KNIGHT #1

Featuring the totally revamped Moon Knight.

Story.....Alan Zelenetz
Art.....Warner & Cruz
Cover.....Chris Warner
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN #103

Ace Mercado (from *Moon Knight*) joins the Bugle staff.

Story.....Peter David
Art.....Buckler & Gil
Cover.....Rich Buckler
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ ROCKET RACCOON #1

"Masque of the Red Breath"

Story.....Bill Mantlo
Art/Cover.....Mignola & Gordon
[75¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ ROM #67

"Life on Mars"

Rom stops off on Mars.

Story.....Bill Mantlo
Art.....Ditko & Russell
Cover.....Jim Starlin
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]

□ SPIDER-MAN INDEX #3

Indexing *Spider-Man* #59-90 of Amazing *Spider-Man*.

Compiled by George Olshevsky
Cover.....Al Milgrim
[\$1.25 color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ STAR WARS #96

Luke battles the new Dark Lord and discovers who She is.

Story.....Jo Duffy
Art/Cover.....Cynthia Martin
Inks.....Bob Wiacek
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ THOR #356

All by.....Walt Simonson

Pencils.....Sal Buscema
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ TRANSFORMERS #5

Now a regular series, but with a new cast.

Story.....Bob Budiansky
Art.....Trimpe & Joyce
Cover.....Mark Bright
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/26; newsstand o/s 3/19]

□ X-MEN #194

Featuring the Juggernaut on the

run.

Story.....Chris Claremont
Art/Cover.....Romita Jr. & Green
[65¢ color comic; ships 2/19; newsstand o/s 3/12]



1985 Marvel Comics Group

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

□ ALIEN LEGION #7

Begins a multi-part story of the Legion Vs. Harklons on a hostile world.

Story.....Alan Zelenetz
Art/Cover.....Chris Warner
Inks.....Whilce Portacio
[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/19]

□ DREADSTAR #18

[Delayed from last month]

[\$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/19]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

□ DOCTOR WHO #98

In addition to interviews, previews, and articles, the issue features a *Dr. Who* comic strip by Steve Parkhouse and John Ridgway.

[\$2.00 direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships February]

WaRP GRAPHICS

□ MYTH-ADVENTURES #5

Story.....Robert Asprin
Art/Cover.....Phil Foglio
[\$1.50 black-and-white direct-sales magazine; ships 2/20]

□ THUNDER BUNNY #1

Story.....Marty Greim
Art/Cover.....Brian Buniak
[\$1.50 black-and-white direct-sales magazine; ships 2/20]

In April, the war continues
ON EARTH.

SECRET WARSTM II

The epic saga begins in
SECRET WARS II, issue #1, and continues in:



YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS A SINGLE ISSUE!



All art on pages 23-30 1985 DC Comics, Inc.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

*An Inside Look
at DC's
Universe-
Spanning
Housecleaning:
CRISIS ON
INFINITE-
EARTHS
by Mark Waid*

Gardner Fox hadn't written many silver-age Flash stories as of 1961. Matter of fact, this was to be his first full-length novel starring the Scarlet Speedster. And between him and editor Julie Schwartz, they had come up with what they thought was a truly exciting idea. Why not find a way to team their hero up with the original Flash, his namesake from the Golden Age of Comics whom DC had retired ten years earlier?

Thus was born the classic "Flash of Two Worlds," in which the old science-fiction idea of "parallel earths" was introduced to a new genre of readers. Over the next few years, fans were at team with their newfound knowledge that old heroes never die—they just show up on Earths resembling our own, but in universes parallel to the one from which the Flash and his fellow Justice Leaguers operate. Moreover, they were to learn that each of these growing number of worlds could be reached from the others through magical or super-scientific means, enabling the Justice League of Earth-1 to team with the Justice Society of Earth-2 to team with the Marvel Family of Earth-5 to team

with Captain Carrot of Earth-C and so on, and so on...

However, after the novelty began to wear off a few years later still, DC began to wonder whether or not they'd created, with this virtual alphabet of planets, a Frankenstein monster beyond their control. A new generation of readers seemed to be having trouble keeping track of an ever-increasing number of Earths, throwing up their hands in despair, and ignoring DC in favor of other companies such as Marvel, with their tighter, less confusing continuity. As a result, DC began to see the complexity of the DC Universe as less of a clever gimmick and more of a liability, keeping them from attracting what they felt was their proper share of the marketplace. Thought was given as to how to simplify the DC Universe and make it easier for the new reader to grasp without feeling steeped in a miasma of Supermen, Batmen, and Plastic Men.

And this year, the thought has given birth to the deed. Writer/editor Marv Wolfman, associate editor/co-plotter Bob Greenberger, and artist George Perez are hard at

WOLFMAN: "At the end of #4, everything is destroyed. Everything."

work during DC's golden anniversary year giving a fresh beginning to the history of DC Comics, adding a new chapter and closing many, many others, with the 12-issue maxi-series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. All three are, understandably, very excited about the project, and were happy to talk to **AMAZING HEROES** about what it's like to wrest order from chaos, and continuity from a *Crisis*.

Background

"It's grown tremendously," says Marv Wolfman, originator and writer of *Crisis*. "The Monitor was originally in the *New Teen Titans* in what was basically a crime story. His sole concept at that point was that he catalogued all Earth's heroes, their powers and methods

of operation, and sold that information to criminals. However, he was based on a character I had created under the name 'The Librarian' 15 years before, intending, oddly enough, to do exactly what we're doing now in *Crisis*. As a fan, I had always wanted to see DC continuity across the board, and had dreamed of one character uniting DC's heroes in one large story that would fix everything.

"Then, because of a letter I printed in *Green Lantern* saying 'You really should fix up DC continuity,' to which I answered 'Yes, we should,' I began seriously thinking about it again, and started talking this old project over with Len Wein and some other people as a special series for DC. They loved it, because they saw it as a way of getting around all the convoluted, confusing series of universes and Earths and futures and pasts. Len suggested, since he knew all about the background of the Monitor/Librarian from when I created him, that we pick him up and use him exactly as he was originally intended." From that point forward, the Monitor, orbiting Earth in his space satellite, began appearing in virtually all of DC's titles during 1984, as a prelude to the series. "Because we decided to use him this way 'after the fact,' there were some minor discrepancies between his

first two appearances and the way he came across afterwards. Fortunately, we kept him hidden during that time, so that helped. We always cloaked him in shadows and so forth. We did not intend to show the Monitor's face, either, but we ended up doing it in one issue of *G.I. Combat*, which is almost nice in a way, because the one book that almost no fan cares about is the one with the big secret in it. I changed Lyla," the Monitor's female assistant, from a "gun-moll" to "someone the Monitor had picked up from Earth 20 years ago when she was an infant, which explains the name Lyla, which is not the best name for a cosmic character. Then it worked. Everything came together."

Upper management at DC was at least as enthusiastic as Wolfman about the idea, if not more so, and gave him the go-ahead. "Then it was a matter of coordinating it with all the various DC editors. Fortunately, almost every single one of them seemed very positive about the series. By connecting all the books together a little bit more tightly, it helped the entire universe, and our entire line.

A whole bunch of us sat down in San Diego Con last year and worked out a number of storylines connected with *Crisis* that will affect all our books. We worked out the little details between characters and universes.

Crisis, along with its sister book, *Who's Who: The Definitive Directory to the DC Universe*, was originally scheduled to be co-written and -edited by Wolfman and Wein, but, says Wolfman, "deadlines are making it impossible for both of us to do both books. It's too much work. Trying to split everything between the two of us wasn't working out, but I'm pleased overall with the way it turned out. I'm stronger in terms of plotting anyway, and Len is a fanatic about the 'who's who' type of stuff." However, each will still serve as consulting editors on the other's book.

The Story Itself

"The way I plotted the story along with Bob," explained Wolfman, "is, rather than try to make this into one 12-part story, which for me does not work because you tend to lose direction, it's three four-issue stories. There's no break at the end of issue four—it's just that we go from one place to another place, and solve an awful lot of the problems. By issues five through eight, a lot of the world has changed, and a lot of the situations are different.



Then, as it stands now, the last two issues are where everything comes together. They're the ones that are closest to the original concept, that of a 'History of the DC Universe.' They set up the new history.

"The first two issues of *Crisis* deal with the end of several worlds and universes familiar to DC fans, and the anti-matter menace coming to Earth-2 and Earth-1, which is what it's been brought down to at this point." Our heroes (and villains), brought together by the Monitor, have been assembled and charged with the responsibility of defeating the wave of anti-matter energy from the Qward Universe that is moving from dimension to dimension, wiping out entire positive-matter universes and filling the gap. "What he's been doing these past months (in his guest-appearances) is pitting villain against hero to achieve a very specific blending of powers. You will notice, for instance, that Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman are not in the first issue. That's because power is not enough to achieve what needs to be done."

By this time, too, characters are popping in and out with increasing frequency. Explains Greenberger, "There is no standard core of characters. The first issue's worth of characters are a starting point. As they get sent on their missions, some will get wounded or incapacitated and have to drop out, and new, unforeseen circumstances will require sending for reinforcements."

Adds Wolfman, "Essentially, what's happening is that the heroes have to set up these 'vibrational forks,' in a sense, to re-establish the gap between the dimensions, which are each separated by a vibrational barrier," as established way back in *Flash* #123. Their mission is to recalibrate the universes. "Their initial mission, though, is only a part of the story. There are a lot of bizarre twists about issue #4, the tale moves into another realm, and what happens to the various Earths between issues #4 and #5 creates the new second element to the storyline, when, at the end of issue #4, everything is destroyed. "Everything."

Issues #5 through #8 find a new, "interim" world formed, according to Wolfman, "in a universe sort of in-between the positive and negative universe. Issue #10 is where the new, final world will form, and most of the structure will be settled.

"The real conflict comes when we discover who and what is behind all of this. A lot of it has to do with the Guardians of the Universe, a lot of it has to do with the anti-matter universe of Qward.

Things are not always what they seem to be in the storyline. There are a lot of red herrings, a lot of twists and turns to keep things moving."

Crisis #7 will be the big "origin issue", says Wolfman. "It will be a double-sized book, explaining the Monitor, Harbinger/Lyla, Pariah, and the origin of the DC Universe. The Monitor, you see, has no real super-powers of his own. He's orchestrating all of this because of his knowledge—or concern, more than anything, caused by the villain and his connection with the villain, which is a very specific one that we'll learn in this issue." Moreover, issue #7 contains, in Wolfman's words, "probably the biggest 'calamity' to occur in *Crisis*. One of DC's main characters will go away forever. The second, very big one will be going away in #8."

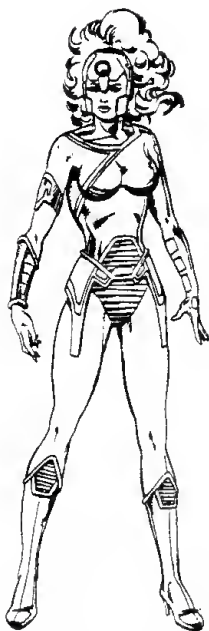
Finally, issues #11 and #12 (which is also scheduled to be double-sized), "resets the entire universe, with some of our really big characters, who no one thought we'd ever touch, affected greatly.

"They are the hardest for me to do, because if done wrong, they could be real boring. One potential out we have is, if the story takes on even stronger proportions, as sometimes happens, we may expand and just wind up the story with #12. Already I've had to push back two or three minor events, because, even though my outline said 'this and this and this,' it wasn't so simple when I found myself plotting page by page. When we get to #8, I'll have a better idea of the pacing."

The New Characters: Harbinger

Wolfman points out that *Crisis* is an event of birth, not just death, and that several new characters will appear in the series, three of which premiered in the first issue, including Harbinger, the super-powered alter-ego of the Monitor's assistant Lyla. "Harbinger is from the Earth. She was orphaned 20 years ago, found by the Monitor, and adopted when he first discovered our villain and his plan to use his anti-matter universe to overtake the positive universe. The Monitor turned her into his ward, taught her what she needed to know, and at the same time was aware right from the beginning that she would end up killing him—which she does, in #4. She plays a crucial role, not only in the death of the Monitor, but in the final outcome of the entire story."

About her powers, Wolfman



Harbinger. Sketch by George Perez.

says, "she has a cosmic power that is semi-undefined. Her basic ability is machine-given—she has no natural abilities of her own—which is why, in the very first issue, she had to enter a machine that filled her with the energy she needed to carry out her initial mission. This machine is essentially the Monitor's way of tapping into the negative dimension, which also explains how the villain is able to take Harbinger over. It's a minor power when she splits into sections. She cannot stay split for long, she also cannot keep the powers for long—the effect is like a battery that drains out very quickly, which is why she is unable to go against anyone one-to-one, too. She needs reenergizing on a regular basis."

Pariah

"Pariah," the caped figure that witnesses the destruction of Earth-3 in *Crisis* #1, "is less defined. I haven't yet worked out fully his abilities, only because he won't be that essential to the final outcome. His only real power, if power it is, is this curse to be sent to appear whenever there's a disaster. By the nature of that ability, he will be giving clues to the final resolution. My hope is that he, and maybe Harbinger, will survive all of this. But since the last two issues have yet to

WOLFMAN:
"[In CRISIS #7],
one of DC's main
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The second, very
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#8."

be fully plotted, it remains to be seen."

The Luthor Baby

"The Lex Luthor of Earth-3, who I established back in *DC Comics Presents Annual* #1, has married the Lois Lane of that Earth [introduced in *Secret Society of Super-Villains* #14] and sends their child [Alexander] in a "dimensional top" to Earth-1. The problem is that the only place he knows that there's super-heroes is in the Justice League of America satellite, which has, of course, been abandoned. So the Luthor baby is brought to the

Monitor's attention in issue #2, and becomes very important to the entire story, particularly near the end.

Alexander Luthor is composed of both positive and negative energy. Somehow, for reasons that neither we nor the Monitor know, when the baby was sent into Earth-1 and passed through the anti-matter cloud, his body chemistry was altered. Now his body is actually half positive matter, half negative matter. He simultaneously exists in two universes. It's a real nice visual." Unlike Harbinger and Pariah, he will have no "superhero" name, at least not at first, because "I want to keep the connection with the Luthor of Earth-3... especially as we bring in the Luthor of Earth-1 [in issue #4], and even Brainiac, because of the connection he has always had with Luthor. Alexander is important more as a catalyst for what occurs."

Spin-Offs and Tie-Ins

"During the summer months, all DC's books will somehow be involved with the *Crisis*," says Greenberger, with events and consequences crossing and crisscrossing from solo-series to *Crisis* and back. For example, "an Earth being affected by the *Crisis* does all kinds of nasty things to ecology. We

were talking about things like red skies and earthquakes, ice ages, and typhoons. Julie Schwartz is taking it a step further in *Superman* and is talking about things like a realignment of the constellations, clocks running backwards, compasses no longer pointing north. We're working very closely with all the editors in that way. Everybody wants to kibitz. Even the people who sit there and grouse end up wittingly or unwittingly contributing.

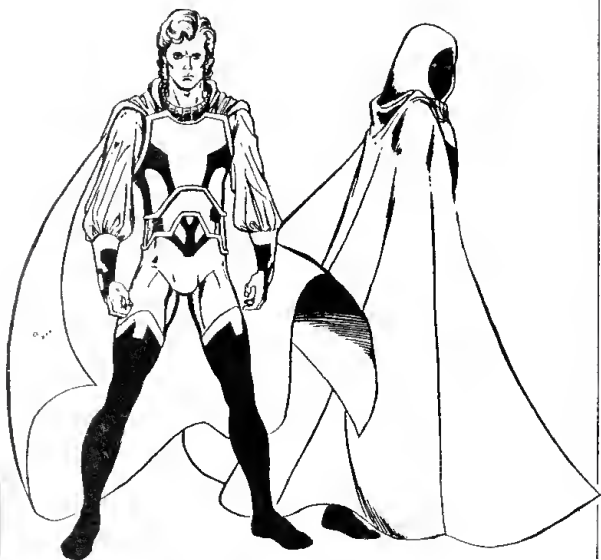
"Aside from me, Len and Marv, there's been one other person who has been a fountain of suggestions, and that's Dan Mishkin. Even though he's in Michigan, he's in constant phone contact. We just got a several page memo from him regarding Amethyst's role in the crisis. A couple of weeks before, we had finished hammering out this wonderful, wacky crossover starting in *Blue Devil*, going into *Crisis*, and ending up in *Omega Men*. We're talking about a lot of fun and a lot of help. I single him out because he's been the most prolific, but everyone has been very, very helpful all along the way."

In addition to the *Blue Devil-Omega Men* adventure, DC is planning a number of one-shot specials tying in with *Crisis*. "For instance," according to Greenberger, "in issue #3, we have a variety of characters running around Markovia in World War II for four to five pages. We wanted to expand upon that, so, based on some suggestions Marv and I made, Dick [Giordano] assigned Bob Kanigher a 40-page *Losers Special*, building off of this sequence, focusing attention on the *Losers*, who haven't had their own feature for some time. [Evangeline's] Judith Hunt is pencilling, and it's scheduled for July release. We're also talking to editor Andy Helfer and writer Steve Englehart about possibly doing a special issue of *Green Lantern* that would be *Crisis*-related and would play off some changes in the structure of the Green Lantern Corps and the history of the Guardians that Steve was planning anyway. Somewhere along the line, there will be some further revelations about the Guardians and their pivotal role in the *Crisis*. I've been pushing Helfer to do some *Tales of the Green Lantern Corps* stories that play off the *Crisis* because we don't have enough books that can truly show the cosmic scope of the problem."

Perez

As if *Crisis* didn't already have

Pariah. Sketches by George Perez.





enough going for it, DC chose to assign their hottest artist, George Perez, to pencil the series (though they never exactly had to twist his arm). Problems with the first issue's printing have not dampened Perez's enthusiasm, though he was understandably disappointed with it. "Basically all the fans got to see was a small part of the month's work that went into it. This is one of the toughest books I've ever had to handle, because the pressure is on, and I don't want to end up failing the company in any way. *Crisis* is getting in on time, but it's always very, very tight. I hope to get it back on a regular schedule very soon, but by the time I started the first issue, it was already late! On top of that, I couldn't fit Marv's plot into 25 pages, and when I told them that, they went to 32, plus a wrap-around cover. Talk about pressure!"

"Since I plan to get off of regular monthly books for some time after this, this is kind of my swan song for series work. Obviously then, I want it to be my best work to date. I had gotten involved with it at a time when I was a little younger and a little faster. I started recently realizing that I was itching to produce a little better work than I could do on a regular monthly basis, like on the *Titans*. When I decided to take the assignment in earnest, it was just after the JLA-Avengers book fell through, and I really wanted a big book. I wanted something that DC could show off and could be a big fan favorite."

Seems kind of a shame that a man so excited about comics can't, by virtue of his involvement, look forward to going down to the newsstand once a month and picking up the new issue of *Crisis* in the same way that anyone outside the project can. It works out, though. "I

deliberately asked them not to give me an overview. Since I cannot read the book with the same excitement as a fan can, I want to get some sense of personal excitement about it, so I get the plots on an issue by issue basis and get my excitement that way. It's my way of having a fanlike fun with it. Besides, now that I'm not involved in the plotting by my own choice, if the fans don't agree with something DC does with a character, I'm blameless! I'm just drawing this stuff! 'My God, they've killed this character, off! Drawn nice, though...'"

One of the rewards of *Crisis*, says Perez, is the opportunity to draw almost every character in the DC Universe, including ones he's been wanting to do for a long time. "Who am I looking forward to drawing? The Metal Men. The Forever People. Anthro was a lot of fun. So was Bat Lash. I'm doing a lot of research for this one, too—I have to. In one issue, alone, I have to draw Earth After Disaster, the Legion's future, current-day New York, the wild west, and Markovia during World War II—plus a brief flashback to Arion's Atlantis."

"The hardest part by far is wanting to draw in a Perez style, but not wanting to lose the integrity of who I'm following. For instance, with Kamandi—there's no way I can draw like Jack Kirby. Our styles are as different as night and day. Nevertheless, I want to keep the essence of the character the same. With Anthro, I did more jagged edges and freehand panel borders. With the western sequence, I'm using rounded panel borders, like *Bat Lash* used to use. It's a book I'm trying to think about."

Perez also mentions that *Crisis* is produced in the oddest variation of

the "Marvel-style" yet. Upon receiving Wolfman's plot, he does extremely loose layouts—"no faces, just figures, and an indication of who the characters are." Then it's sent to Wolfman for scripting, then lettered, and only then goes back to Perez to pencil. "So, based on what Marv has written, I sometimes alter things. It gives me a chance to get the gut level storytelling out first and then, when I get the artwork back, sit down and really get fancy with characters or panel layout. As a matter of fact, there's only been one page in the book so far with a standard six-panel layout, and that's the one featuring Brainiac, who I wanted to show in a very stiff, regimented, logical progression."

Secret Wars

When *Crisis* was originally announced last year, it took some heat from fans who made the inevitable comparison to Marvel's *Secret Wars* maxi-series, thinking it a cheap rip-off of a financial, if not artistic, success. And no one will deny that there are some fundamental similarities—a 12-issue story featuring all the company's mightiest heroes, in an epic touted as a milestone in comics history. However, according to the men behind *Crisis*, that's where the similarity ends. Says Greenberger, "*Crisis on Infinite Earths* is designed to celebrate DC's 50th anniversary, by taking everything DC Comics has stood for in the past half-century, giving it a dusting-off and a fresh beginning, and setting the stage for the next 50 years. *Secret Wars* focused on fighting. We're focusing on change."

PEREZ: "SECRET WARS was playing with continuity. CRISIS is establishing it."

Wolman preferred to escape that sense of imitation by staying as far away from the Marvel series as possible. "I've never read the Secret Wars. I read the first five pages of the first issue, and decided at that point that, since I'm going to be doing a series that will be considered close to it in concept—even though we announced our project four years ago—I'd rather not read the rest of the series."

"Secret Wars," says Perez, "was a Marvel 'family book,' encompassing the whole company, uniting it. When that came together, I think, is when Marv and Len became more intent on having a book that would give that 'company feeling' to DC, and the 50th anniversary was perfect timing. It gave the book a reason to exist other than to throw all our characters together. Marv, Len, and Bob have really made an exciting book of it."

"Secret Wars was playing with continuity. Crisis is establishing it."

Earth: Post-Crisis

"After the Crisis is over and every-

thing is in its new place," according to Greenberger, "things from the past are not considered to be a part of any character's historical baggage unless the writers choose to bring that aspect back. When this is over, Ace the Bat-Hound never existed, okay? Consequently, writers have taken a glitch in continuity and used it to build a story on. It's one thing for Roy Thomas to do it in the *All-Star Squadron*, because he's rewriting DC's early history, putting it all into a perspective, which is great. On the other hand, how many 'Untold Tales from the JLA Casebook' have we had?"

"One of our problems," adds Wolfman, "has been that the Legion's future is not the same as Kamandi's future is not the same as Tommy Tomorrow's or Space Ranger's or the future Green Lantern's or Abra Kadabra's future. So one of the concepts I came up with right from the beginning was to do what Robert Heinlein did. He has a timeline that runs through a number of his books, as we will now have running thru a number of our DC comics. He also has several books that do not relate to the timeline at all, and that gives us the same opening to introduce any kind of book we want and not feel like it all has to connect," pointing out that "the Marvel Universe is strangled in many ways, because every book they introduce in the Marvel line has to interconnect. We don't have to do that once we've set this up. Nevertheless, we will have a consistent past and a consistent future."

Moreover, although the overall plan is to have all DC's multiple earths collapsed into one, they will still be a part of DC history. "Earth-1 and Earth-2 will have ex-

isted, will have mattered. We're not denying them. *All-Star Squadron* will still be placed on [Earth-2]. There will be some past that will never have existed—not much. It's being done with the best of intentions and as much care as possible."

Storytelling

"We'll be adding many more characters in the third issue and from then on, and yet I think the pacing is leisurely, it's not rushed. We're trying not to concentrate on tight scenes. There are action scenes, but we're trying not to overdo it because everyone has seen five thousand different fight scenes in comics. Even with having George Perez draw them, which means they're better drawn than 90% of them, we've still seen them before. There is action, but we're trying to work out the story in a sensible fashion."

"My hope is that even if the fans don't agree with everything that we do, that they say we produced the best comic that we could do. They may not like everything that we do, but I don't think we'll be getting the same flak that *Secret Wars* has gotten where people are saying that the writing isn't good and the art isn't good. We're not claiming that this is the definitive writing style of the DC Universe, I'm not saying that my version of every character is the definitive version. I just think that readers coming into the DC Universe will find it easier to deal with, and the writers and editors will find it a more coherent place."

"I have never enjoyed writing a book as much as this one. I approached the first issue scared stiff,



LOOKING
TO
MEET
NEW
PEOPLE
?



ECLIPSE
COMICS

ZOT!

DON'T BE LEFT OUT!

GREENBERGER: "During the summer months, all DC's books will somehow be involved with the Crisis."

not in the plotting, but in the writing. About five pages into it, though, I said, "I'm having fun." I think it's a solid story. I think it'll be controversial. I know I'm gonna get the hate mail."

Philosophy

"I realize that I'm saying this callously because I don't know how else to say it, but some characters have outlived their usefulness. Now before the fans come down on me for saying that, I've been a fan for a long time too, longer than most of them. Nevertheless, we are a business. In 1956, five years after the Golden-Age Flash dropped out of sight, the character was revived, revamped, and made to work for the 1950s and 1960s. But certain characters no longer work because they've gone as far as they can in terms of sales, and of writers who can work up stories with them. A lot of characters just don't sell any more. So you can either let a character just fade away into oblivion, or you can do something special with him, bring him in a third generation as the Flash brought in the second generation. What we're trying to do is pave the way for that third generation of a number of characters—not an awful lot, but a number—to do what was done in 1956, and provide a new excitement."

"When it's done well, and that's the crucial word—well—no one complains. They all complain in advance, because nobody likes change, but when it's done well, they say 'Yes, this is better.' We received a ton of complaints when the first ads on the New Teen Titans came out, and they saw new characters, saying 'Where's Gold Eagle, where's the Bumblebee?' When they saw the book, all the same people wrote back saying they liked it. The question is, are we going to make these changes work? Some of them will be made in *Crisis*. Some new characters will

be premiering there, and some will be ending their reign there. DC has been working for the last year on a new generation of those characters who are not coming back. Some may be completely different. Some may never come back, even their names may be retired. The idea is to take those characters who don't work, who aren't selling, who the creative crews have not been able to make work over the last 15, 20, even 30 years, and try and fix them up and not be saddled with heroes that are purely nostalgia."

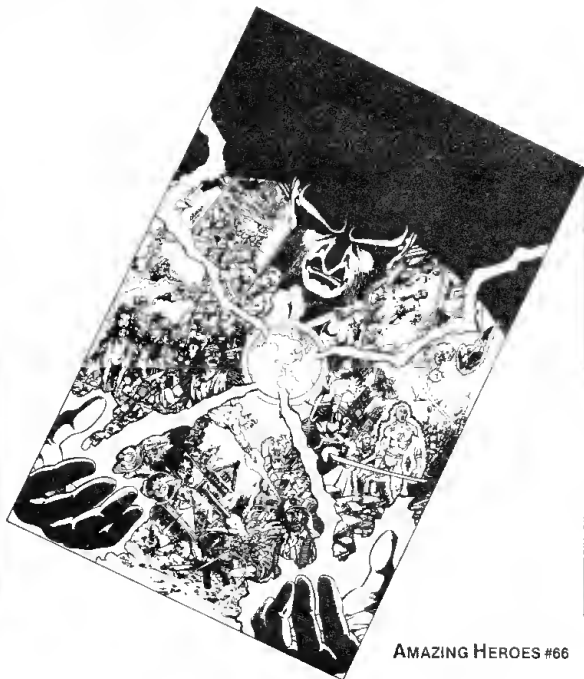
"I fully expect there to be some people who will look at the series and just make it a cutoff point for their DC collection. At the same time, if the new versions of their favorite characters are better, I would not be surprised to see those same people come back. If people are rooted solely in the past, they're really limiting themselves. You have to be willing to make changes for the future. I know how certain things will affect me—I've been a fan since 1951 and I'm as close to any of those characters as any fan could be—closer, because I've written the majority of them. So I feel very strongly for them. At the same time, I have to think of the company and pave a way for the future, make the new DC lineup work for the company."

"When people think of DC Comics, they think of a very staid company that doesn't change characters, that publishes the same Superman stories that they pub-

lished in 1955. Because of that, even with some of the better books we now have, we haven't moved up to where we should be in the market-place. I think we're publishing some of the better comics. But we have this very bad reputation for being set in our ways. The *Crisis* is an indication against that. We were asked to provide a 'death list' of changes. Len, Bob and I worked one up based on the ideas given to us by various editors, and brought it into Jenette [Kahn, publisher], and her comment was, 'It's not daring enough.'

"*Crisis* will completely change the DC universe. Absolutely no hero is immune to *Crisis*. These are big changes. I have no autonomous power to make them. They are changes made with Jenette and Dick [Giordano, executive editor]. We have outlines very clearly the first ten issues. They exist for everyone at DC to see, to go through, to comment on, and to suggest changes. The last two issues are open right now, and we're still working on those, because we want to make absolutely sure that they make the DC Universe viable for the next 50 years."

MARK WAID previously penned prolifically for the 1985 *Amazing Heroes* Preview issue, and is working on, of all things, a preview of the Fleming/Giffen Ambush Bug mini-series, for AH #68



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DRACULA LIVES!

THE TOMB

OF

DRACULA

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NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE!

All art on pages 32, 36, 38-40, 42-45 © 1985 Marvel Comics Group



THE VAMPIRE STRIKES BACK!

by Lou Mouglin

The legend has it that Bram Stoker dreamed of Dracula the night that he had too hefty a portion of dressed crab for dinner. Actually, it wasn't Dracula per se that haunted his dream; it was a "king vampire," risen from his grave and seeking living victims. He began writing *Dracula* in 1895, basing his supreme villain on Vlad the Impaler of Wallachia, a bloodthirsty fifteenth-century prince. The book was published two years later, and its archetypal vampire-figure became one of the most primal horror characters of the twentieth century.

It was a long time before Marvel Comics would begin *The Tomb of Dracula*...75 years, to be exact. But, in its time, the sub-creation of Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan became one of the greatest horror-comics ever published, and did

Bram Stoker proud.

Recently, a *Dr. Strange* tale has set the slate clean by totally destroying Dracula and rubbing out all vampires on Earth. Dracula, who had walked the Earth for over five centuries, could only bear 11 years worth of comic books.

Dracula Before Marvel

Adaptations of *Dracula* into comic books, both the novel and the character, had been around for at least 20 years before Marvel's definitive version. Avon's *Eerie* #12 (1953) featured a 25-page adaptation of the Stoker novel which, unfortunately, I have been unable to locate. Numerous Atlas stories in

the 1950s used Dracula as a "kicker" for their last panels, much as they had the Frankenstein monster, since both were in the public domain. Dell did a one-shot adaptation in 1962 with art by Bob Jenney, in which the Lord of Vampires was probably embarrassed to make even a token appearance. Then, in 1966, a "Count Dracula" became a super-hero with art by Tony Tallarico for three more issues, which were of similar quality. Yet, in the same year, writer Otto Binder and artist Alden McWilliams teamed up to do a comic-strip adaptation of the book as a Ballantine paperback; this was probably the first high-quality Dracula story in comics. This was followed, shortly, by "The Coffin of Dracula" in Warren's *Creepy* #8 and 9, by Reed Crandall and Archie Goodwin. "Coffin" was a



From **TOMB OF DRACULA #1**: Dracula returns to life.

sequel to the original novel and one of the finest moments in graphic vampire history.

Warren continued to use Dracula in later years; "Dracula's Guest" by E. Nelson Bridwell and Frank Bolle (*Eerie* #16) was a creditable adaptation of the short chapter deleted from Stoker's book. Dracula became a series character in *Vampirella* when writer T. Casey Brennan revealed he was an alien from the planet Drakulon. (The idea conjures up unhealthy visions of Bela Lugosi in *Plan Nine From Outer Space*.) Finally, in 1973, Pendulum Press presented a condensed version of the novel adapted by Nestor Redondo, which eventually was reprinted as a Marvel Classics Comic.

All this went before *Tomb of Dracula*.

Marvel Puts The Bite On

With the black-and-white experiment of *Savage Tales* #1 in 1970, Marvel planned to follow it up with a 75-cent black and white book tentatively titled *Dracula*, and announced it in their Bullpen Bulletins page. Warren, after all, had been making money off of vampires and related monsters for almost a decade. But the stifling of *Savage Tales* and the deregulation of Comics Code bans against vampires came close on each other's heels, and Walpurgisnacht came to the House of Ideas. *Werewolf By Night* premiered in *Marvel Spotlight*. Not long after it, *Tomb of Dracula* was on the stands.

It would have been hard to gauge the quality of later TODs by the first

issue. It lacked depth, leaned on too many clichés, and blunted its potential in its eagerness to get Dracula before the public and test their reaction. Neal Adams apparently did the cover of #1, or at least inked it, featuring nothing more fear-inspiring than Dracula standing beside a stream in a forest, holding an unconscious girl in his arms and grimacing. (The face had been extensively reworked, most probably by John Romita or Marie Severin.) "The Vampire is Born!" proclaimed a banner under the picture. If this was any indication, he might well have stayed dead.

The story, simply titled "Dracula," was written by Gerry Conway and pencilled and inked, in a rare instance of self-embellishment, by Gene Colan. Colan would remain on the book through its entire 72 issue run; a fan of horror fiction, he specifically asked for the assignment and turned out some of his greatest, moodiest work on this feature. Conway, however, left the comic after its second issue and never returned, save for isolated stories in *Dracula Lives!*

Still, the first tale did have some atmosphere, thanks to Colan's evocations of darkness. The story opened with a pair of headlights forging the way into a Transylvanian village in 1972; the occupants of the car were one Frank Drake, his friend Clifton Graves, and their common love Jeannie who had eyes only for Frank. The threesome got their jeep stuck in a ditch in the middle of the proverbial driving thunderstorm, and were forced to rent a horse and carriage. Their destination was Castle Dracula. "Don't tell me you're afraid," protested Frank to a burgomeister. "Didn't that stuff go out with Bram

Stoker?" "Herr Stoker told the truth—in part," muttered the old man as he polishes his glasses.

The heroes—more or less—of our tale finally stood outside the castle's battlements, and Frank begins to muse into a flashback. He was heir to a million dollar fortune, squandered it, and was searching for a new source of income when he discovered a Transylvanian castle his family owned. "It's been passed down through generations, since we changed our name to Drake and left the old country! ... The family name used to be—Dracula!" Clifton Graves saw possibilities in the old heap of stones as a tourist attraction, and the huge amount of Dracula tours that regularly pass through Romania today would seem to confirm Clifton's suspicions. Moreover, Frank had a family diary that recounted the original Count Dracula's transformation into a vampire, and, about three generations back, his dispatchment by stake by Abraham Van Helsing.

This was a complete and utter departure from the novel, which had Jonathan Harker and Quincey Morris killing the vampire. One suspects that Conway had not read the book before scripting the story; even Van Helsing's name is misspelled "Van Helsing."

With his lover Jeannie, Frank elected to return to Castle Dracula. Once within, the trio separated, with Graves stumbling upon a crypt hidden below the upper reaches of the castle. Inside was a coffin, holding a skeleton with a wooden stake protruding from the ribs. Dracula, as such, made his first appearance in the Marvel Universe. "Must've been really whacko to convince all those clowns he was a vampire," Clifton

mused. He pulled the stake from the chest, walking off, planning to arrange a fatal accident for Frank. Unless he intended to stake him to death, it's hard to see why he removed it from Dracula's chest.

As any devoted horror-movie buff could predict, the inevitable happened to Dracula's bones. A strange coalescing began in the dusty coffin... a coming-together of ancient mists, of long-disparate ash... he (Clifton) doesn't see the returning features, released from the limbo to which the sealing stake had condemned them... He doesn't see that *Dracula* lives again!

And so he did. With skin absolutely white, wearing a mustache and goatee and clad in evening dress and an opera cape, Colan's Dracula wasn't derived specifically from any single movie portrayal but combined features from many of them and wound up with a strong, tall, powerful figures, an anti-hero of heroic stature. As such, he was the first villain to ever successfully carry his own Marvel series. And his first action was downing a terrified Clifton Graves with one swipe—bullets from Grave's gun penetrating him with no ill effect—and throwing him into a deep pit. His next action was transforming into a bat, confronting Frank (in the familiar Lugosi-esque pose, holding his cape before his face), and taking hypnotic control of Jeannie. Drake warned him off with Jean's silver compact, causing him to fly away for the nonce as a bat. Dracula was alive again, with the undead life of the vampire, and he celebrated by draining a village barmaid dry of blood. The Transylvanians responded by putting Castle Dracula to the torch, even though, as we find out soon enough, not very much of it burns. By the end of the story, Jeannie had joined Dracula as a vampire, and Drake had begun a war that would not end for 11 years to come.

Waiting for the Wolfman

Issue #2 of *Tomb of Dracula*, fronted by a good John Severin cover, clumped onward with Frank rescuing Clifton from the pit in the castle, Dracula beginning his masquerade among mortals, two more women dead by Dracula's hand, a fight between the Count and Frank Drake, and the second death of Jeannie. Archie Goodwin, ex-writer supreme of *Creepy* and *Eerie*, was the next to place his



From #3: Rachel Van Helsing meets Frank Drake.

two-issue stint, but his work proved surprisingly pedestrian. Frank, understandably depressed after slaying Jeannie, was contemplating suicide when two new characters pulled him back from death's door: Rachel Van Helsing and Taj, a giant Indian.

Rachel was a beauty, as all female leads must be. As might be expected, she was the great-granddaughter of Abraham Van Helsing, and her parents had been killed by a vengeful Dracula as she watched on, helpless, all of five years old. From that day until her last, she vowed to destroy Dracula once and for all, and took up in her ancestors' footsteps. Rachel's favorite weapon was the crossbow, whose wooden arrow would do in Dracula as effectively as any stake. It was effective against all other vampires. However, Drac would merely vanish in mist while the arrow passed harmlessly through him, taunting her about her "toy bow and arrow." She received an ugly scar across her face after being gashed by a vampire bat in issue #12 and bore it through the rest of the series. Though she remained an icy, battling fury through the run of *TOD*, she finally became Frank Drake's lover in the final pages of issue #70.

Taj, as powerful and efficient as Punjab in *Little Orphan Annie*, was

a huge mute whose connection with the band of fearless vampire hunters remained mysterious until issues #28-31. Therein we learned that Taj had a wife whom Dracula had crippled and a son, Adri, converted to a vampire. The boy was restrained beneath ropes and cloves of garlic for years, with blood supplied from bottles, until the fearful villagers stormed Taj's house and staked his son through the heart. Grieving, Taj remained with his wife and left the series.

But at their first appearance, they enlisted Frank in their anti-Dracula crusade. Things did seem to be looking up for the series. For, on page four, after Clifton Graves had been thrown out of a pub, he was set upon by a fog-shrouded being, who pronounced, "Dracula has need of you!" This time, the fog, the opera cape, and especially the piercing eyes, protruding fangs, and menacing expression looked right. It was the work of Tom Palmer, inker extraordinaire, who started work with this issues. Except for a brief break in #8-11, Tom was to stay with the book through its run. His line lines, atmospheric blacks, and all-around craftsmanship gave the art its last necessary touches, just as it had in the late '60s when he had worked with Colan on *Dr. Strange*. Also not to be ignored was the lettering of John Costanza, one of the best in Marvel's stable. All that *TOD* lacked was its definitive writer—and he would be along in less than a year.

Tomb of Dracula #3 proceeded with Clifton Graves, under Dracula's hypnotic influence, searching for Dracula's coffin—which Frank Drake had stolen. Dracula eventually discovered his stolen box, murdered a night porter in lukewarm blood for sustenance, and had an initial fracas with Frank, Rachel and Taj, which wound up with the hunters in the office of Inspector Chelm of Scotland Yard. Chelm was the good guys' liaison with the authorities, and he was around for many issues to come. Later on, he'd even appear in a *Marvel Two-In-One* set in London, just for good measure. Chelm became a believer in vampires after the night porter rose up from the depths of the morgue, and he stayed well into the magazine run of *TOD*.

The remainder of that issue and #4, Goodwin's last, told the tale of an aged beauty who wished to regain her lost youth by becoming a vampiress. Alas, she found out that she was guaranteed immortality, but retained her aged appearance. Dracula sought a dark mirror whose magic powers allowed access into another time period. He

found it and entered it, with Taj hanging on all the way, travelling into a sidereal world full of demons in the next issue and from there back to early twentieth century Transylvania. This story, like the next, was written by Gardner Fox. Dracula, though evil, was much mellowed than he would become in later days. He protected Taj from harm, reasoning that he would need a blood supply if things got too desperate. Fox must have read *Dracula*, but followed with the distortion of the novel: here Van Helsing, who had merely been a doctor and professor in the book, was elevated to a Baron from Transylvania who ruled a village near Dracula's hiding place. Fortunately, in later issues this part of the *Dracula* mythos was corrected. Frank and Rachel and Taj chased Dracula back to his rightful era. A one-part tale in #6 ended with a shaggy monster story on the English moors.

It was time for Marv Wolfman.

Hour of the Wolf

It is safe to say that, if Wolfman had not written *Tomb of Dracula*, no notice would have been taken of it. Colan and Palmer were great art-



Hannibal King, vampire sleuth, from #25.

ists, but it took Wolfman to bring the final element into synthesis. In a way that few comic writers did, Wolfman knew how to infuse horror fiction into his writing, which is a much harder task than writing another run-of-the-mill horror comic. Indeed, few horror comics are worth noting in the entire history of comics.

Marv Wolfman was the final ingredient and the catalyst to finally make *Tomb of Dracula* work. There are few writers capable of concocting a good horror story in comic form, even today, and thus

few horror comics worth reading. The ECs, the early Warrens and perhaps *Man-Thing* are among the few, and with them stands *Tomb of Dracula*. It is no insult to his current work on *Teen Titans* and other fine series to say that Wolfman reached his peak on *TOD*, and even if he had done nothing else, his place in comics history would have been secure.

Wolfman, to begin with, knew the territory. One of his earliest fan efforts had been a horror-strip fanzine, and one of the stories in it was contributed by Stephen King. He knew something of the occult and had made himself familiar enough with Stoker's novel to make the comic version ring true. Still, there was more. Wolfman seemed to excel in his portrayal of villains, interpreting each one in just the manner they should be. His versions of Doctor Doom, Mysterio, and R'as Al Ghul were right on, and *Dracula* was king of them all. Few writers, if any, equaled him in that department. In his hands, Dracula would as soon mash a stranger's brains to pulp as look at him.

The first effort he made, "Night of the Death Stalkers," in #7, introduced Dracula's most important adversary. Quincy Harker came on stage, confined to a wheelchair, eyes sensitive to light and covered by sunglasses, endowed with an iron will and brilliant brain. He took away the position of lead vampire hunter from Rachel Van Helsing immediately, and continued as such to the end of the comic's run. He was the son of Jonathan Harker, the hero of Stoker's *Dracula*, and as such was quite familiar with his quarry. He himself had lost his wife and the use of his legs to Dracula in battle, and was thus doubly determined to see the world rid of the vampire.

The tale opened with Dracula's attack on a girl, who proved to be

Quincy Harker deploys one of his many weapons.



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From GIANT-SIZE DRACULA #2, another innocent in flight.

Harker's daughter Edith. He is ward off by her crucifix and the arrival of Harker. Later, Rachel, Frank and Taj join him and his daughter, and Quincy reports, "This group (Jonathan Harker and his allies in *Dracula*) dedicated themselves to hunting Dracula. They searched for him, and finally thought they succeeded in destroying him... but he wasn't destroyed... he was waiting for the day he would rise again!"

And rise he did this issue, to mesmerize a horde of children, outfit them with butcher knives, and send them against the vampire fighters. But before he did this, Dracula performed his first classic victim stalk. Each issue of Wolfman's *Dracula* contained one of these, a portrait of an innocent whose only crime had been to cross the path of the vampire lord when the latter was hungry. To him, they were only a variation of a Big Mac. In each one of these, a portrait of the prey was given in stark detail:

"Buckley Grainger runs... he runs though he knows there is no place to run... he runs because if he doesn't, Buckley Grainger will die... and Buckley Grainger does not want to die this night... not the night before his wedding to the lovely Anne Milligan..."

"Which makes it some sort of crime... because he must!"

So passes the victim.

The story proceeded with Dracula smashing through the assaults of the vampire hunters and luring them into his trap. He received a poison dart in the arm for his troubles while the heroes of the piece staved off the army of blank-eyed youngsters. The next issue introduced Heinrich Mortte, a vampire doctor passing for a human. Mortte had a daughter and a decent life in the community, and wanted no part of Dracula's plans.

In the end, the vampires waged a vicious battle in bat form and Mortte's daughter saw her father slain and impaled on a wooden fence before her very eyes. This was abruptly becoming the grimmest comic book Marvel had ever produced.

Wolfman hadn't quite hit his stride, however, and needed about three more issues to practice. The next one sent Dracula to a small English village where he showed uncharacteristic patience with a young lad who wished to follow in his footsteps, until he learned his new friend's true nature. *TOD* #10 introduced Blade, the Vampire Slayer, who integrated the book with a touch of *Shakti Among the Vampires*. Blade had, as one Marvel copywriter had put it, been "born bastard to a prostitute" who was slain by a white-haired vampire while in her birth throes. She produced a child immune to vampire bites, who grew up a jive-talking, wooden-knife-throwing vampire stalker. Blade joined the Harker clan on occasion and even rated some solo stories in *Vampire Tales* and *Marvel Preview*.

Eventually he met another victim of "that stinkin' white-haired vamp," Hannibal King. King was a vampire detective in the Sam Spade tradition. He never killed humans, wouldn't turn into a bat and handled all of his cases and consultations at night. He related his stories in the first person and, later on, became a fine supporting character up to the point where Blade and he finally tracked down and killed their nemesis, in issue #53. Later, both of them teamed with Dr. Strange in the final *Dracula* story, and King was cured of his vampirism.

TOD #11, the last issue of the "trial" period, was inked by Jack Abel and introduced Lucas Brand, a criminal biker who got vampir-

ized by the Count. He was to figure as a character in Wolfman's first serial, later on, but his first appearance was rather conventional.

From issue #12 onward, *Dracula* was about to come into its own.

Meanwhile... In The Magazines

Before we proceed, a word or two must be said about *Dracula Lives!* *DL* was a black-and-white magazine featuring our classic anthology which started around the time of *TOD* #8 and racked up a respectable 13 issues. Its stories featured Dracula in action during various historical periods from 1459 to the present, without the benefit of the strong supporting cast of *Tomb*, which may have hurt it. Most of the stories were pretty run-of-the-mill stuff, but there was gold among the dross. *Dracula Lives!* #2 sported the classic *Dracula* origin story, "That Dracula May Live Again!" written by Wolfman and drawn by Neal Adams. Therein, we saw how Dracula had been struck down in battle with the Turks in 1459, made vampire by a gypsy "healer," and saw his wife killed before his eyes while he languished in chains. Angriily, Dracula snapped his bonds, crushed the life out of the soldiers guarding him, and closed with his foe, Lord Turac, giving him the vampire's deadly kiss. Turac would subsequently be dispatched by his daughter, who bargained with evil gods to let her remain immortal until she could attack Dracula—and lose—in 1974. Dracula swore over his wife's newly dug grave that "The world will never again be safe from—Dracula!" A series of sequels showed how he won lordship over all vampires in a duel of pointed stakes, how he regained control of

his kingdom, and how he duelled Solomon Kane, Cagliostro, and a host of others in his 500-year unlife.

In issue #5, Roy Thomas and Dick Giordano began the first full-length adaptation of the *Dracula* novel. It was a worthy effort, with Giordano depicting an aged, white-mustached Count and creating delicate, antique portraits of Jonathan Harker, Mina Murray, Lucy Westenra, and the rest of the group. But the project's sheer length defeated them. The adaptation ran through *Dracula Lives!* #5-8, 10, 11 and *Legion of Monsters* #1 without covering half the book. One wishes it could have been carried through to the end, just to see how Marvel could have revived Dracula after he had been decapitated and knifed through the heart. (Marv Wolfman once told me that the decapitation didn't "take" because it wasn't done with a wooden knife. Great kiddie, that Marv!) Black-and-white *Dracula* tales continued to appear sporadically in Marvel horror anthologies, but none were very memorable.

Serials and Killers

The real action was still to be found in *Tomb of Dracula*, which began its horror-serial format with the Doctor Sun subplot in a very few issues. First, Dracula had to pay for his murder of Harker's daughter, and pay he did when Blade executed him on a lucky blade-toss. But it wasn't for long. The vampire's skeletal remains were borne off by hypnotized pawns, a simple-minded evangelist came into possession of the body, and, in full view of a crowd, he pulled forth the knife and brought Dracula back to unlife. Obliging, Dracula electrocuted him with a thunderbolt.

With #15, Marv Wolfman tried a new tack: the Diary of Dracula sequence. This was not unlike the epistolary form of the *Dracula* novel itself, as the vampire lord sat



Yuck. (From TOD #21.)

himself down to write in his journal of past exploits, which would be illustrated by Colan and Palmer. It made for some good mini-horror stories and gave us insight into the vampire's character from his own pen, so that, bit by bit, Dracula became one of the most well-drawn Marvel creations of the 1970s. That is if he can be termed a Marvel "creation."

After a one-issue "back from the dead" story in #16 *TOD* #17 laid

the foundations for the battle that would climax in issue #21. The fearless vampire hunters took up the battle anew on a train out of Paris a la *Murder on the Orient Express*, as Doctor Sun, an unseen presence, trained Lucas Brand, a motorcycle-hood-turned vampire, to be Dracula's perfect nemesis. But Sun was to stay unrevealed for four more issues. *TOD* #18, headed straight into the first crossover novel: Dracula encountered Werewolf By Night in a sequence that looked like the twin of an old Universal Studios monster epic. The fight ended in a draw in *Werewolf By Night* #15, and the two antagonists separated, though Topaz, the Werewolf's lady, would make an appearance in *TOD*'s final issues.

Rachel Van Helsing and Frank Drake kept up a running battle with the Count through the snows of the Transylvanian Alps for two more issues, until Dracula finally collapsed from bloodloss. He was saved, unconscious, by minions of Doctor Sun. The latter proved to be the disembodied brain of a Chinese scientist, kept alive in a degenerated container and connected to a computer. Clifton Graves, stitched together like a patchwork quilt after surviving an explosion, made a final appearance; his main purpose was to be impaled on a bolt from Rachel Van Helsing's cross-



Lilith—Dracula's daughter.



how. Finally, in #21, Dracula met Lucas Brand in a hand-to-hand battle as vicious as any seen in a Marvel comic. Sun's objective: replace Dracula with Brand, and gain the lifeblood he needed to survive. Brand turned rebel against Sun and was destroyed. Dracula, as always, survived.

There Were Giants In Those Days

After a Russian vampire story in *TOD* #22, the first issue of *Giant-Size Chillers* was injected into the book's bloodstream. This was the era of Marvel's "giant-size" comics, double-sized books which featured the best-selling of their regular 32-page comics. The first crop featured a super-team (the *Fantastic Four*), a solo (Spider-Man) and a monster-hero, with Dracula winning the draw. *Chillers* #1, the only issue done by Wolfman and Colan and the only issue to bear that title before being renamed *Giant-Size Dracula*, introduced Lilith, *Daughter of Dracula*. She looked more than a little silly at first, wearing a skin-tight uniform slit to the navel and a red bat-winged cape, but she soon spun off into a fairly good (if sometimes sadistic) solo series written by

Steve Gerber. Lilith was the daughter of Dracula's first, despised wife, who became an artificial, magically-powered vampire from a gypsy's spell; she did not fear the crucifix and lived by possessing the body of an innocent. Said innocent in the 1970s was Angel O'Hara, who was pregnant when possessed and remained so for eight years—and if anybody in the series thought it a long time to term, they were courteous enough not to say so.

Chillers #1 also introduced another female innocent, Shiela Whittier, who occupied a castle Dracula wanted and was tormented by the ghost of her evil father. Daddy, though disincarnate, had a habit of lashing his daughter about the back, and Dracula, somehow touched by her plight despite all his evilness, and desirous of a servant to replace Clifton Graves, set things to rights by smashing father Whittier's corpse. Shiela, in gratitude, cowered against her benefactor. She accepted him as a lover and refused to believe in the darkness he never showed her until the very end.

Tomb #24 took stock with a long, action-packed fracas between Dracula and Blade, and a developing romance between Frank and Rachel. #25 introduced the canny vampire gumshoe, Hannibal King.

And, in #26-29, the *Chimera* story began. This tale introduced David Eshcol, a young orthodox Jew and the friend of Shiela Whittier, in a point-counterpoint of religion vs. anti-religion, with a mystic artifact, the *Chimera*, as the prize. It ended with Eshcol dead at Dracula's hands, Shiela suiciding to cheat Dracula, the *Chimera* destroyed, and the vampire with empty hands. Altogether, it was the hardest-hitting story of the early run of *TOD*.

Doctor Sun: A New Novel

With that, *Tomb of Dracula* began titling into a new story-form. The next year's worth of adventures formed a hesitant, interrupted, but nonetheless discernable horror novel. Taj Nital had to see his vampiric son dispatched by villagers, and Frank Drake had to fight side-by-side with Brother Voodoo against a horde of murdering zombies. The underlying theme to the entire series was a war between Dracula and Doctor Sun. The computerized villain had begun to slowly drain Dracula's vampiric powers away. It would be quite a while before the fatal encounter between the two, but it was com-

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ing. The whole series was kicked off by a diary issue in #30, in which Dracula recounted his first meeting with Blade and a historical piece set in the Germany of Otto Von Bismarck. Wolfman knew his history and classical literature fairly well, and it gave his stories solid underpinnings. It continued with Dracula's attempt to place members of the English House of Lords under his dominion in #31, and reached a sharp point with #32, where Dracula and Quincy Harker fought a duel inside Harker's vampire-trapping mansion. Harker triumphed with wooden arrows that pierced Dracula's flesh, but, as he lay dissolving, Dracula trumped his greatest enemy: two of his female vampires held Rachel hostage, and would kill her if Dracula died. Reluctantly, Quincy pulled the arrows from Dracula's body. In return, Dracula scattered the ashes of Harker's daughter from her urn.

However, Dracula had found evidence that his might was on the wane, and sought to trace the problem to its source before it could drain him to the point of death. As persistent as the vampire hunters were, they were usually the least effective in fighting Dracula. Doctor Sun came closest to destroying him forever, and Doctor Strange actually accomplished the trick: only Quincy Harker seemed above incompetence among the rest.

It was like sending in junior G-Men to fight the Mafia. Dracula deduced it was Doctor Sun and promptly fell into the hands of a vengeful female fashion designer who used him for a two-issue kill-

ing spree. Dracula was able to use her to gain information on Dr. Sun's whereabouts, and deliberately neglected telling the woman that the victims of a vampire become vampires themselves—that is, he told her just before he let his victims into her apartment.

Doctor Sun proved to be in Boston. By this time it was halfway through the run of *Tomb of Dracula*, and all but the last few issues would take place in America. The cover of #35 depicted him leaping out of a landed jet while soldiers pumped rifle rounds into him, futilely. Inside, Dracula killed his way through an airport, ended up terrorizing his way across the ocean in an Air Force jet, and disembarked on a Boston airport to begin his search for Sun. Meanwhile, Frank Drake, feeling about as competent as he ever would after his battle with Brother Voodoo, was reunited with his comrades and things moved ahead to climax.

TOD #37 introduced two of the last important supporting characters to the mix: Harold H. Harold and Aurora Rabinowitz. Harold, was a short, bespectacled, neurotic Jewish writer for *True Vampire Stories* who mimicked Woody Allen; Aurora Rabinowitz was his unattainable dream, a quarter-wit secretary to his editor. They crossed Dracula's path after Harold found the weakened Dracula collapsed near his prey in the street and brought him home for nothing less than an exclusive interview. Aurora thought he was cute, and almost opted to become a vampire. Harold would stay on

through the last issue, while Aurora made spotty appearances after the Dr. Sun serial.

The series had to come to a climax, and it did, in issue #38. Everybody concerned and Dracula were captured by Dr. Sun, and Dr. Sun killed Dracula dead with his silver-stake-wielding pawn, Juno. After that, he burned Dracula's bones to dust with a flamethrower and stuffed the power in an urn.

For one whole issue, Dracula didn't appear in his own magazine—except in a dream.

The problem that confronted the good guys now was unseating Doctor Sun, whose mesmerized troops had taken an unshakable foothold in Boston. There was no other way to topple him than by resurrecting Dracula. The crew was at odds as to how this might be accomplished, until Harold dug up the information that "the tears of a virgin pure" might reanimate a vampire. Aurora fit the bill, cried into the urn, and found that the instant vampire mix did indeed produce a living Dracula. With that, the lord of the undead made a second foray against his enemy, leading the Harker clan, and triumphed. Doctor Sun was not dead, as we found out in later issues of Wolfman's *Nova*, but he was gone from TOD forever.

Singular Tales: Angels and Devils

A couple of singular tales followed the Dr. Sun novel: a tribute to *The Night Stalker* in #43, with Dracula encountering an investigative reporter, and a well-done confrontation between Dracula and Doctor Strange. This latter tale crossed over from TOD #44, in which Dracula killed Dr. Strange and turned him into a vampire, into Dr. Strange #14, where Strange set things to rights in his ectoplasmic form. Steve Englehart completed the story, while Colan and Palmer illustrated both parts.

Dracula #45 began the next serial which would soon surpass even the Doctor Sun opus and run roughly 14 issues. In it, Dracula would get married, father a son, imitate Satan, head his own church, and lose all of the above in a single issue. By this time Wolfman's horror writing was as good as it would ever get, and Colan and Palmer equalled him. Most outstanding plotlines would be tied up in the Church of Satan series and new ones would be begun. But, more than that, it showed us that the vampire lord still had the ability to love within him, and its denouement became

Harold H. Harold, the nerd hero, from *TOMB OF DRACULA* #37.



all the more shattering for that.

Basically, Dracula located (through the helpful offices of Harold H. Harold) the local Satanist coven in Cambridge, Massachusetts and, by showing up atop an inverted cross at the moment of an evil anointment rite, became identified as an incarnation of the Satanic Majesty himself. Wolfman's research gave the scene an aura of blasphemous authenticity. Immediately the head priest of the coven, one Anton Lupeski, presented Dracula with his bride, Domini, the anointment candidate. Domini, an innocent who had become entrapped in the influence of Lupeski, married Dracula in the next issue and eventually bore his child, golden-skinned babe named Janus. Lupeski, however, soon distinguished between the Devil and Dracula and made plans to retake his coven from the vampire's leadership.

Wolfman was in no hurry to get to the climax of the tale. In between, we got a lot of diversionary tales. Blade and Hannibal King tracked down the white-haired Deacon Frost and finally saw him dead. Dracula became entrapped by the phantoms of Robin Hood, Frankenstein, Tom Sawyer, and other fictional characters. The Silver Surfer dropped in for a battle, in one of the best appearances he has made since his original series was cancelled.

An angelic being with gold skin turned up and demonstrated that there were curbs put on Dracula's power, set by Heaven and that one day he would indeed meet his final extinction. Harold H. Harold wrote a vampire potboiler which was adapted for issue #56. Blade starred in an issue which excluded Dracula altogether. This was the set-up for perhaps the most shocking Dracula tale of all. "The Last Traitor," in issue #59. Therein, Lupeski lured a reluctant Harker and his group into his coven armed with silver bullets in their rifles, and made an all-out assault on Dracula. A stray bullet passed through Dracula and struck Janus, killing him. In a terrifying rage, the vampire lord crushed Lupeski's face with his bare hands while Domini remonstrated with a portrait of Christ: "Why must vengeance be Yours?"

"Vengeance is mine, Domini!" shouted Dracula, turning to destroy Harker, Van Helsing, Drake and Harold. But Domini demanded their release, and as the foursome move away, she tried to—impossibly enough—induce Dracula to "Embrace me, and accept His words!" In anguish, Dracula changed into bat form and



A spectacular guest appearance by the Silver Surfer from #50.

flew off into the night. For once, he had become the victim

The Final Stage

Tomb of Dracula was heading into its final 11-issue sequence now. Issue #60 depicted Dracula directing a raging storm at the roofs of a city, raging over his son's death. The story was pretty much the same, as Dracula raged through the environs of the dark church,

remembering the failures of his existence and revealing that his firstborn son, and all his descendants down to Frank Drake, had tried to kill him. Acknowledging his power was helpless against that of Heaven, he perched atop a building in a thunderstorm and challenged the heavens to slay him in vengeance for his evil. Lightning struck about him, but would not touch him. Dracula was to receive no respite.

But Janus was not to remain dead for long. In the very next issue,

Dracula's son.





The Ultimate Good confronts the Ultimate Evil.

Domini revived him with a mystic spell that merged the angel Dracula had thought slain in an earlier issue with his own lifeless body. The new Janus, with the power to turn into a golden eagle, prevent Dracula's victims from becoming vampires, and slay his sire, kept up a running battle with him until the end of the run. Then, over a three-issue sequence Dracula was summoned to an audience before Satan himself had his powers removed. Now human, he spent four issues fending off the attacks of a hired killer, his

daughter Lilith, and the Harker clan, until he renounced Satan. At that point the adversary returned his abilities and left him a broken man, though yet a vampire.

In the meantime another vampire had taken the throne Dracula had vacated in the interim, and he was marked for death by every vampire in creation. The trail led him back to Transylvania, where, in defiance of all that had gone before, Dracula defended a peasant family against his former kin, even taking up a cross and driving them away. Then, the final issue

came, and Dracula was forced to battle Torgo, a vampire from the time-period of Attila the Hun, in a duel of wooden stakes. After a vicious, bloody fight, Dracula succeeded in piercing Torgo's heart and reducing him to dust. But he refused to lead the fawning vampires who, minutes earlier, had clamored for his death. Instead, he returned to his castle. Waiting there was none other than Quincy Harker. Against all odds, Harker rose from his chair, lunged forward, and planted a silver spike in Dracula's chest, killing him. An explosive he had planted tore the castle apart and destroyed Harker seconds before he could complete a decapitation. Dracula, at long last, was dead by Harker's hand.

For a time.

In the final sequences, Frank and Rachel ended up in each other's arms. Janus separated into his two component parts and left Domini with a living child, and we tracked through a brief montage of Dracula's history, finishing with an image of Dracula shrouding his castle. *Tomb of Dracula* was finished, with one of the most rousing final issues of all.

It should have been the end, but it wasn't.

The Long Death

Dropping sales figures had forced Wolman, Colan and Palmer to make an end of the four-color comic, but the upsurge of Dracula movies and plays around 1979 led them to try a new *Tomb of Dracula* black-and-white magazine two months later. The first story was a fairly good occult tale, reviving

The death of Rachel Van Helsing, from X-MEN ANNUAL #6. Art by Bill Sienkiewicz.





Dracula and Sif as vampires, from **THOR #333**.

Dracula by having a sorceress pull the silver spike from his bones when a "Dracula tour" made a visit to his castle. Wolman teamed with Steve Ditko for the second issue, introducing the Dimensional Man and an amorphous demon named Asmodeus who begat an unborn son upon a mortal woman in a plot that has yet to be resolved. Ditko, formerly one of the greatest wash artists in comics, seemed curiously inadequate on most of this tale, perhaps due to poor art reproduction.

The third issue of *Tomb of Dracula* magazine, returning Colan and Palmer to the book, and was Wolman's final issue. He left in an unhappy parting, though he was soon to co-create the immensely successful *New Teen Titans* at DC. The book, for the next two issues, was written by Roger McKenzie, who proved over-fond of gore and without the depth or characterization Wolman was expert at.

The loss of *TOD*'s rich supporting cast also hurt the book immeasurably. Jim Shooter penned a decent Civil War vampire tale for *TOD* Magazine #6, the final issue, and once again Dracula went to the grave. There was one ill-considered appearance in *Howard the Duck* magazine along the way, a crack at Wolman that saw Harold H. Harold become a vampire. And, in several of Dracula's later appearances, it almost seemed as if Harold H. Harold was writing them.

The lord of vampires reappeared first in *Defenders* #94, fighting side-by-side with Dr. Strange's band against the Six-Fingered Hand. Chris Claremont and Bill Sienkiewicz seized upon him after that in *X-Men Annual* #6 in a well-drawn

but tragic tale in which Rachel Van Helsing, at the end of her career, became a vampire and was dispatched by Wolverine. Dracula ran through a two-issue sequel in the *X-Men*'s regular comic afterwards, in which he sought vainly to make Storm his consort. He tried much the same thing with Sif in a two-issue *Thor* story afterward, only to find out that Asgardians are immune to vampirism. In all these stories, it was obvious that superheroes and vampires mixed about as well as oil and water, stylistically, and few artists and writers even had the ability to pull it off.

Finally, *Dr. Strange* #59-62 tied up the entire Dracula saga with a long story done by Roger Stern, Dan Green and Steve Leialoha. In this mini-epic, Blade reappeared for a last bow, Hannibal King was cured of vampirism, Frank Drake returned for revenge, and Dr. Strange battled Dracula in a final encounter. At the finish, Dracula and every other vampire on Earth, including Lilith and, yes, even Harold H. Harold, was wiped out of existence by a mystic spell. What Quincy Harker had failed to do, Dr. Strange accomplished. At long last, the book was closed.

How to sum up? Well, *Tomb of Dracula*, for over seven years, was more than a good comic. It was a

literary comic. It read almost as well as good second-string horror fiction, and it was virtually the only fear book worth reading in the 1970s (save for *Man-Thing*.) It was also one of the best comic adaptations of a popular character in print, with Conan, Tarzan and Fu Manchu for coffinmates. It was Mary Wolman's first major work, and it brought a new dimension to the long and distinguished careers of Gene Colan and Tom Palmer. It provided seventy good comics which can be read repeatedly as an example of good comics art. For the normally-limpid genre of horror comics, that isn't at all a bad record.

The tomb of Dracula is sealed at last. May it never open again. But let no man forget the nights when the vampire stalked through a tour-color realm, waiting to claim as his victim anyone who dared to open his comic book. Dracula is dead. Long live *The Tomb of Dracula*! □

LOU MOUGIN has written countless *Hero Histories* for **AH**, and can also be found on page 51 of this issue, within the pages of his "Golden Age Index."



by WILL JACOBS and GERARD JONES

THE COMIC BOOK HEROES

Chapter Three

The Superman Mythos

Mort Weisinger enjoyed telling this anecdote about his teenage days with Julius Schwartz and their science fiction club: "We were hiking in New York's Palisades Park—Julie, Otto Binder, myself, and some of the other Scienceers—when suddenly, we woke up in the hospital! A car had hit us and knocked us over like a row of clay pigeons. We could have all been wiped out but we were very fortunate. I often wonder, immodestly, what would have happened to science fiction and comics if we'd all been obliterated there."

What indeed. Schwartz's contribution has been suggested already. But comics would have been no less poor for the absence of Weisinger and Binder. Their lives crossed many times from 1935 to 1970, and each time something was added to comics or science fiction. One of those crossings, in the late 1950s, made possible the second step in the history of the Silver Age, the revitalization of Superman.

Otto Binder had been among the most prolific pulp science fiction writers of the 1930s. For a while his agents had been Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz; later one of his biggest markets was *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, of which Weisinger was the young editor. But Binder feared the pulps would not last, and sought something more secure. His brother Jack, a comic book artist, told him about the explosion in the comics market, especially among super-hero titles. Through Jack, Otto became a writer for Fawcett Comics, and from 1941 on made himself the principal writer for Fawcett's big star, Captain Marvel.

"Comics were like a drug, or a hypnotic spell, to me," Binder once said. "The moment I began writing them . . . I was captive of this new and colorful way of writing stories." During his career Binder would write over 2,000 stories for twenty publishers, including over half of the Captain Marvel Family lore, a contribution that made him, along with Gardner Fox, one of the two most important writers of the Golden Age.

Of all the heroes who had sprung up in the wake of Superman's success in the late 1930s, none copied the nature and powers of its inspiration more than Captain Marvel. DC shortly sued Fawcett for copyright infringement and a battle began—of lawyers, of sales figures, and of loyal young readers—that would rage through the 1940s and into the 1950s.

The same year that Binder took the helm of Captain Marvel, Mort Weisinger was hired by DC Editorial Director Whitney Ellsworth to help edit a number of comics, including Superman. A hard taskmaster and an editor with a clear vision of what he wanted, Weisinger (with Ellsworth and co-editor Jack Schiff) would make as deep an imprint on the Man of Steel as Binder would on the World's Mightiest Mortal. For the next twelve years the two friends would be competitors, and in the process would make their characters the two prominent heroes of the Golden Age, but with creative approaches that were nearly opposite.

The Superman of Weisinger and his associates was almost a god. He had no private life, except as meek Clark Kent, no personal quirks, no failings, only an

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Clark Kent seeks employment: a classic moment from Superman's earliest days.

awesome array of powers. He was aloof, mysterious, all-business. Weisinger had his writers subordinate all else to the rigid, complex plots he demanded. Superman's world was rarely colorful or imaginative. The focus of his adventures was the very concept of a super-hero.

Binder's treatment of Captain Marvel, by contrast, was affectionate and humorous. The captain was a powerful but amiable, sometimes bumbling, fellow who often depended on the wits of his child alter-ego, Billy Batson, to save his skin. Binder was never as careful with plot as Weisinger's men, but his imagination poured forth an enending stream of wonders: A world-conquering worm, a gentlemanly talking tiger, a bickering family of made scientists. If Weisinger fascinated his readers with his concepts and plots, then Binder charmed his with his characters and inventions.

Even the mightiest heroes, unfortunately, were not invulnerable to the hard times that beset costumed characters in the 1950's. Failing sales and the DC lawsuit forced Fawcett to abandon its comics in 1953.

Meanwhile, money had tightened up at DC and Weisinger had lost some of his best writers. Superman's popularity continued largely only because of the television show about him which had premiered in 1952. The show, sadly, only made the quality of the comics worse. Television, by its nature, permitted only a rather limited range of mundane problems for Superman to tackle, and the comics were forced to follow suit. Even more detrimental to the comics was the fact that Mort Weisinger functioned as story editor for the program (with Whitney Ellsworth as producer), taking much of his energies away from his editing work, and increasing the load on co-editor Schiff's shoulders. Superman languished for lack of attention.

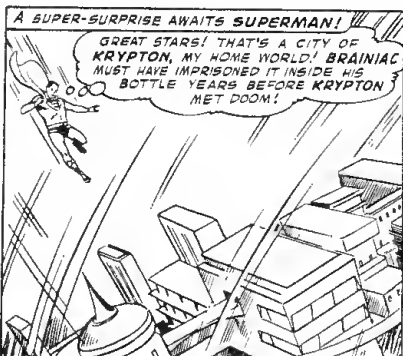
In November, 1957 the Superman TV show ceased production, and Weisinger brought his full attention back to the comics. (The next year, an editorial reshuffling at DC made him the sole editor of nearly all the Superman titles, while relieving him of the burden of co-editing other comics. He couldn't have failed to sense the lack of vitality in the Man of Steel, especially if he saw the care going into the new Flash just down the hall. It was clear that something had to be done with DC's premier hero, and the new company policies made it clear that science fiction would have to be

part of it. But the regular writers, after nearly twenty years with the character, seemed to have little notion where to turn for Superman's new direction. He needed a new element on his staff, one that was not conditioned by sixteen years of Weisinger training. He found that element in Otto Binder.

Binder had been contributing stories for the Superman family of comics—Action Comics, Adventure Comics, Superman, Superboy, Jimmy Olsen, and, later, Lois Lane—since Captain Marvel's demise in 1953, but it was a few years before Weisinger began drawing on his talent and science fiction background to remake Superman's world. Their relationship would be a tense one personally, and ultimately unsatisfying for both men. Binder was not a careful enough plotter for Weisinger, and they would butt heads frequently over Weisinger's demand for story changes. But theirs was a productive union, and in 1958, 1959, and 1960 they introduced a constellation of changes that turned Superman from a concept into a character and gave him as delightful a universe as any Captain Marvel had ever inhabited.

There is no point in trying to determine which ideas

Superman's first journey into Kandor.



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Kandor: a child's most private fantasies.

were Binder's and which were Weisinger's: most of them were born in conference and the two men themselves disagreed over who had contributed what. (Other writers, especially the just-returning originator of Superman, Jerry Siegel, also augmented many of the ideas.) But it is sage to guess that none of them could have existed without the marriage of Binder's imagination and Weisinger's sharp editorial eye. It was as if the spirit of Captain Marvel had entered the body of Superman.

Weisinger had long been fascinated with Superman's origin—his birth on a distant super-scientific planet called Krypton, the planet's destruction, and baby Kal-El's Moses-like exodus to Earth. Now, with science fiction in the air, the space-travel theme seemed especially appealing. Somehow, though, he had never been able to write a good story out of the Krypton idea until Binder, in 1958, pitted Superman against an alien villain called Brainiac. Brainiac, as Superman's first good outer-space foe, was interesting enough: but he paled beside what Superman discovered aboard his spaceship. For Brainiac's hobby was shrinking cities from many worlds and imprisoning them in bottles, and one of those cities was Kandor, from the planet Krypton (Action #242, July 1958).

Kandor was like a child's most private fantasies made real. It was all of childhood's doll houses, ant farms, secret hiding places, and imaginary playmates all rolled into one. When Superman turned a shrinking ray on himself and entered the bottle-city, he plunged into a tiny world in which the ancient ways of Krypton had never died. There the people welcomed him as one of their own; some of them had even been friends of his mother and father. There, among brilliant-colored skyscrapers, wizened men in togas performed miracles of science. There strange animals labored in farms beneath an artificial sun.

No one on Earth dreamed of Kandor's existence, for Superman hid it in his Arctic Fortress of Solitude. This Fortress, introduced a month before Brainiac in a story quietly celebrating Action Comics' twentieth anniversary, gave the Man of Steel his first opportunity to appear not merely as a hero but as a character—putting his teet up, playing a little super-speed chess with a super-robot, painting a Martian landscape with his telescopic vision, joking with his old pal Batman

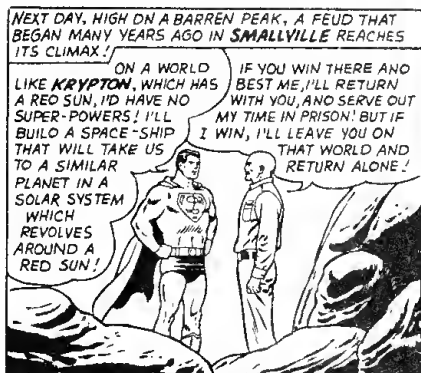
(Action #241, June 1958). The Kandorians there were his secret friends, putting their wisdom and scientific wizardry always at his disposal. And when he tired of his lonely life as the Superman of Earth, he could always shrink into that sheltered world and walk among his own people as Kal-El of Krypton.

As thrilled as the kids were by Kandor, none of them could have been more excited than Mort Weisinger himself. He saw immediately that the total point of Superman's new direction would have to be his Kryptonian background. For one thing, Kandor enabled Superman to shed his powers, occasionally, for when he entered the Kryptonian conditions of the city he became a normal being once again; this opened up many plot-avenues that had been closed by the hero's near-omnipotence. For another, Kandor and the Fortress ended Superman's days as an impersonal symbol of justice. Suddenly, he was an individual, with a people and a past, with hobbies and friends, an object of interest in and of himself.

The logical encore to Kandor was Krypton itself. Through the device of time-travel Binder took us there, first with Jimmy Olsen in 1959, then with Superman himself in 1960. Though other writers would set stories on that planet, Binder remanded its chief geographer. He gave us a wonderland of robot factories, jewel mountains, sky palaces, fire-falls, scarlet jungles, interplanetary zoos, jet-taxis, fire-breathing dogs, scientific tribunals, and even anti-gravity swimming pools.

This was the setting for one of Weisinger's finest stories, variously attributed both to Binder and to writer Jerry Siegel, which marked the first of a type of epic, emotional adventure that would come to distinguish the Superman line: "Superman's Return to Krypton" (Superman #141, Nov. 1960). This full-issue story—thus three times the length of the usual Weisinger tale—tells of Superman's struggle, bereft of his powers and acting as his father's laboratory assistant before his own birth, to prevent the approaching doom of Krypton. His desperation is further fueled when he falls in love with a mysterious beauty, Krypton's leading actress. But destiny cannot be changed; in the end Kal-El returns to the Earth of the present, super-powered indeed, but still orphaned and homeless. This introduction of pathos to Superman, the realization that not even all his powers could give him back what he loved most in life—raised him from a mere costumed crimefighter to something close to a

Superman under a Red Sun: another Weisinger innovation.



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The Superman family gains a new member...

tragic figure. Weisinger had discovered that Superman grew more heroic as he grew less powerful.

The last Weisinger-Binder contribution to this theme arose from the letters of inquisitive young fans. For most of his history, Superman's great powers had been attributed to the lighter gravity of Earth in contrast to that of Krypton. That explanation had worked well at the character's inception in 1938, when his only real power had been unusual strength. But the argument grew less plausible as Weisinger added new powers to his hero. How, these new science-minded kids wondered, would lesser gravity create the ability to fly, or x-ray vision, or a super-memory, or super-ventriloquism?

Weisinger answered that Krypton had orbited a red sun, and that somehow, under Earth's yellow sun, Kryptonians are granted remarkable powers. More than a convenient explanation, this provided the springboard for a number of adventures in which Superman found himself stranded on savage, inclement planets orbiting red suns. The first of these stories was little more than an exercise in cleverness, as Superman slipped out of danger after danger by his wits (*Action* #262, Mar. 1960). But during the 1960s under writers other than Binder, they became some of the most imaginative and suspenseful of Superman's adventures.

The genesis of the red sun stories shows clearly the Weisinger method of developing the Superman myths. He encouraged his writers to try whatever he could imagine, and threw in many twists of his own. Then he listened to the fans. Whatever they liked he would give them again, but with a new wrinkle added. Gradually a whole body of lore grew around the figure of Superman.

Since his days with Schwartz in science fiction fandom in the early 1930s, Weisinger had respected the desires and opinions of even his youngest readers. As an editor of the pulps he attended fan meetings and early science fiction conventions. As an editor of comics he listened to kids.

In 1958, as the revitalization of his comics was just picking up steam, he opened a forum for kids' opinions and questions by introducing the first letter-pages in super-hero comics. After twenty years of costumed heroes, someone was finally asking the people who bought the comics what they wanted to read.

Many of the letters he received were devoted to nit-picking ("How come when Superman takes his Clark

Kent clothes out of the secret pouch in his cape the clothes are not wrinkled?") or the kinds of questions that only kids can conceive ("Will Superman ever give a signal-watch to Perry White?" or "Will Superman ever marry? Please answer or I'll go mad!"), but many told the editor what his readers wanted to see. The idea of Kandor captivated them, for example, they were less curious about Krypton itself; they wanted Superman to show more of his human side; they wanted inside the Fortress of Solitude more often; and they were hungry for new characters.

When Weisinger, in 1958, issued a story that centered on a super-powered woman, hundreds of girls wrote in to demand a female counterpart for Superman. Supergirl, a teenage Kryptonian with powers nearly equal to her cousin Superman's, debuted in a Binder story in early 1959, and was promptly awarded a series of her own in the back of *Action Comics* (#252, May 1959). Aside from Krypto the Super-Dog, Supergirl was the first Kryptonian to join Superman in his life on Earth. Although Binder's stories tended toward condescension and contrivance, Kal-El's cousin Kara did bring another element to his life—a sense of family—around which new types of stories could be woven.

One of the long-term benefits of the innovations of those years was the enormous increase in the variety of possible Superman stories. The writers would no longer be restricted to formula plots—Superman meets crook, crook stymies Superman, Superman overcomes crook—but would be free to give the Man of Steel adventures alone or with Supergirl, with his powers or without, on Earth or in Kandor. In seeking to broaden the range of possible plots still further, Weisinger and Binder introduced a pair of concepts that were like nothing the comics had ever seen.

The first was red kryptonite. This aberration of the notorious green kryptonite, the only substance in the universe capable of weakening Superman, had the ability to work weird transformations in Kryptonian minds and bodies for up to 48 hours. This gave Superman's writers an open field for bizarre story-angles, turning him into a fire-breathing dragon, making him a giant or a midget, giving him a third eye in the back of his head, even splitting him into two beings, one good and one evil. Red K also induced nightmares, such as one in which Superman and Supergirl imagine they have destroyed the Earth (*Superman* #144, Apr. 1961).

... And, of course, a family dog.



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The use of dreams to tell "impossible" stories intrigued both writer and editor. After all, why should a character as fanciful as Superman be bound by a single invented reality? Why not write stories—showing what might happen to Superman if something drastic were to occur in his life? Then anything could be done. . . . Superman could give up his powers, could grow old and decrepit, could even die.

The imaginary stories started small, as a series of tales in Lois Lane comics in 1960, speculating on what Lois's life might be like if she were to realize her dream of marrying Superman. Binder wrote the earliest of them, but he left DC before Weisinger saw their full potential and spread them throughout the Superman line. As with so much of Binder's work for the Man of Steel, these stories would blossom only later, under other writers.

It often happens in the creation of a new kind of comic book that the most significant developments do not occur in the best-crafted stories. Binder was never able to plot with the competence of Weisinger's veterans, Jerry Siegel and Edmond Hamilton. And some time would pass before those men were fully able to assimilate the new ideas and begin weaving them into their intricate stories. The art, too, was getting a little stale, having been dominated by Wayne

Boring since the 1940s. Boring had a good imagination for fantastic landscapes, which helped such stories as "Superman's return to Krypton," but his awkwardness with facial expression and anatomy left him inadequate for the new personal side of Superman. Overall, the effect was of craft far below that of the Schwartz stable, in both writing and art. Superman's best years still lay ahead. By the summer of 1960, Superman and his world were already infinitely more interesting than they had been a mere three years before.

The contributions of Otto Binder did not stop at these. He also gave Jimmy Olsen a stretchable alter-ego called Elastic Lad and invented such menaces as a giant gorilla with kryptonite eyes named Titano. With Weisinger & Siegel he introduced a breed of moronic pseudo-Supermen called Bizarros, who lived on a square planet and did everything backwards.

One of his then least-noticed creations proved to have perhaps the greatest potential of all. In a story from early 1958, a trio of super-heroes from the distant future—one a telepath, one a master of magnetism, one a living conductor of lightning—journeyed to the 20th Century to meet Superboy (*Adventure* #247, Apr. 1958). It was an undistinguished story, and lay forgotten for a year and a half. A few fans, however, thought the idea of a futuristic band of heroes showed potential, and they demanded a return appearance. Beginning in late 1959, this Legion of Super-Heroes would play an ever-greater role in Superboy's life, and would grow into the biggest and most complex super-team in comic history. But that, too, would be the work of Siegel and Hamilton and later writers, and must be saved for a later article.

In 1960 Otto Binder left DC to pursue a career in science-article writing. He complained that with Weisinger he had been required to rewrite so many stories that he was unable to complete enough assignments to make a living. But he had done his job. He had given Superman a new lease on life. With his imagination he had given him a greater fictional freedom than any character before or since. Pulling on his experience in early science fiction he had helped his editor lay the foundation of a charming, dazzling and endearing new universe. As he once did for Captain Marvel, he had helped create a family to bring companionship and drama to his hero's life. He had given the comics' greatest hero, at last, a world worthy of him.

Now it would be up to Mort Weisinger and his staff to make Superman himself a figure as fascinating as any in his world. Already the seeds had been planted for a new Man of Steel, one who would be less steel and more man.

WILL JACOBS and GERARD JONES are the authors of The Beaver Papers (Crown Publishers, 1983) and a slew of parodies for the National Lampoon. The preceding chapter is an excerpt from The Comic Book Heroes, a massive critical history of American super-hero and adventure comics from 1956 to the present, which Crown will be releasing in the Summer of 1985.

THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

Installment 4: The Coming of the Captains

Once more greetings, and welcome to the fourth installment of our one-and-only Golden Age index. Herein we source and trace the reprints of all Golden Age super-heroes from 1938-1955, and list them all in alphabetical order. Each entry consists of three parts: 1) Original comic book from which a story was taken; 2) Books in which the story was reprinted; and 3) story title, in brackets if we had to make one up. Now you know the rules; get in there and let's get crackin'.

Before we begin, we'll have the customary note about our reprint media: *Magnificent Superheroes of Comics' Golden Age, Flashback, Special Edition Series, and Comic Reprints* have all been discussed in various other installments. *The Best of the Big Red Cheese* was another photo-reprint book similar to *Flashback* or *Comic Reprints* that was produced in 1975; hard to find, but worth the effort. *Mysteries in Space*, like *America at War*, is one of those high-quality DC reprint volumes which are indispensable for one seeking good comics SF or war. *The Comic Reader*, the fanzine for whom I occasionally write, reprinted one strip of the obscure '50s hero Captain Flash. *Yesterday's Comics* was a short-lived zine that attempted to publish the entire Captain Marvel Vs. Mr. Mind serial a part at a time, but I have no idea if the series continued beyond #2. Everybody should be familiar with *A Smithsonian Book of Comic-Book Comics*, and that should wrap it all up.

This time we take on our second-largest entry after Batman—namely, Captain Marvel himself. Next issue we begin with Junior, finish up our roster of Captains, and take it from there.

On to the index!

CAPTAIN AMERICA

All-Select Comics #1, Fall 1943

(*Flashback* #14, Dynapubs)

"Mystery of the Human Bats"—13 pgs.

All-Winners Comics #1, Summer 1941

(*Flashback* #23, Dynapubs)

"Case of the Hollow Men"—13 pgs.

All-Winners Comics #5, Summer 1942

(*Comic: A History*, 1971)

"The Vampire Strikes"—12 pgs.

Captain America #1, Mar. 1941

(*The Great Comic Book Heroes*, Feiffer, 1965)

"Meet Captain America"—13 pgs.

Captain America #2, Apr. 1941

(*Flashback* #29, Dynapubs)

"The Ageless Oriental Who Wouldn't Die"—15 pgs.

"Trapped in the Nazi Stronghold"—15 pgs.

"The Wax Statue That Struck Death"—15 pgs.

Captain America #3, May 1941

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #3, June, 1966)

"The Hunchback of Hollywood and the Movie Murder"—17 pgs.

"The Queer Case of the Murdering Butterfly and the Ancient Mummies"—11 pgs.

Captain America #4, June 1941

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #4, Aug., 1966)

"The Case of the Fake Money Fiends"—10 pgs.

"Horror Hospital" (as "The Menace of Dr. Grimm")—13 pgs.

"Ivan the Terrible"—9 pgs.

Captain America #5, Aug. 1941

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #5, Oct., 1966)

"The Gruesome Secret of the Dragon of Death"—15 pgs.

"Killers of the Bund"—10 pgs.

"The Ringmaster of Death"—12 pgs.

Captain America #6, Sept. 1941

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #6, Dec., 1966)

"Meet the Fang, Arch-Fiend of the Orient"—9 pgs.

Captain America #7, Oct. 1941

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #7, Feb., 1967)

"Death Loads the Bases"—15 pgs.

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #8, Apr., 1967)

"Horror Plays the Scales"—13 pgs.

(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #6, Dec., 1966)

"The Red Skull"—13 pgs.

By PETER LUST, STEVE JOHNSON, and LOU MOUGIN

Captain America #10, Jan. 1942
(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #6, Dec., 1966)
"The Phantom Hound of Cardiff Moor"—16 pgs.
(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #9, June, 1967)
"Spy Ambush"—11 pgs.
(*Fantasy Masterpieces* #11, Oct., 1967)
"Hotel of Horror"—13 pgs.

Captain America #22, Jan. 1943
(*Captain George Presents* #30)
(*The Invaders* #10, Nov., 1976)
"Captain America Battles the Reaper"—15 pgs.
(*Captain George's Comic World* #24, #25)
"The Cobra Ring of Death"—18 pgs.
(*Captain George Presents* #30)
"The Vault of the Doomed"—12 pgs.

Men's Adventures #27, May 1954
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #14, May, 1968)
"The Girl Who Was Afraid"—7 pgs.

Men's Adventures #28, July 1954
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #12, Dec., 1967)
"Kill Captain America"—7 pgs.

Young Men #24, Dec. 1953
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #20, May, 1969)
"Back From the Dead"—6 pgs.

Young Men #25, Feb. 1954
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #13, March, 1968)
"Top Secret"—7 pgs.

Young Men #26, April, 1954
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #15, July, 1968)
"Captain America Turns Traitor"—7 pgs.

Young Men #28, June, 1954
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #16, Sept., 1968)
"The Cargo of Death"—7 pgs.

CAPTAIN BATTLE

Silver Streak Comics #21, May 1942
(*Magnificent Superheroes of Comics' Golden Age*, 1977)
"In the Spells of Black Magic"—8 pgs.

CAPTAIN COMET

Strange Adventures #17, Feb. 1952
(*DC Super-Stars* #6, Aug. 1976)
"Beware the Synthetic Men"—8 pgs.

Strange Adventures #22, July 1952
(*World's Finest Comics* #204, Aug. 1971)
(*Mysteries in Space*, 1981)
"The Guardians of the Clockwork Universe"—8 pgs.

Strange Adventures #34, July 1953
(*Superman* #244, Nov. 1971)
"The Lady of the Tiger-Man"—6 pgs.

Strange Adventures #38, Nov. 1953
(*Justice League of America* #60, Feb. 1968)
"The Seeing Eye Humans"—6 pgs.



Captain Comet, from *STRANGE ADVENTURES* #38.

CAPTAIN FLASH

Captain Flash #4, July 1955
(*The Comic Reader* #182, Aug. 1980)
"The Invaders"—6 pgs.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

America's Greatest Comics #1 1941
(*Flashback* #25, Dynapubs)
"Ghost of the Deep"—20 pgs.

America's Greatest Comics #7, Apr. 28, 1943
(*Flashback* #32, Dynapubs)
"The World of Your Tomorrow"—20 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #1, 1941
(*Flashback* #10, Dynapubs)
"Captain Marvel and the Monsters of Saturn"—15 pgs.
"Captain Marvel Battles the Vampire"—16 pgs.
"Captain Marvel Out West"—16 pgs.
"Captain Marvel Vs. Z"—15 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #2, Summer 1941
(*Flashback* #15, Dynapubs)
"The Arson Fiend"—18 pgs.
"Invasion From Mars"—12 pgs.
"The Pirate's Treasure"—14 pgs.
"World of the Microscope"—17 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #7, Feb. 7, 1942
(*Flashback* #35, Dynapubs)
"The Ghost of the White Room"—15 pgs.
"The Pirate of Port Peril"—12 pgs.
"The Science of Dr. Sarr"—10 pgs.
"The Slayer on Skis"—14 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #18, Dec. 11, 1942
(*Shazam!* #8, Dec. 1973)
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel"—13 pgs.



Captain Marvel Adventures #19, Jan. 1, 1943
(*Limited Collector's Edition #C-21*, 1973)
"The Training of Mary Marvel"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #22, Apr. 1943
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"The Pearl of Peril"—12 pgs.
(*Best of the Big Red Cheese*, 1975)
"The Voodoo Show Boat"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #23, Apr. 28, 1943
(*Yesterday's Comics #2*, 1973)
"The Jungle Trap"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #24, June 1943
(*Best of the Big Red Cheese*, 1975)
"The American Lord Haw-Haw"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #34, Apr. 1944
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"Captain Marvel in Oklahoma City"—11 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #35, May 1944
(*Best of the Big Red Cheese*, 1975)
"In the World of Largeness"—11 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #42, Jan. 1945
(*The Best of the Big Red Cheese*, 1975)
"The World of If"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #46, June 1945
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"The End of Mister Mind"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #50, Dec. 1945
(*Adventure Comics #493*, Nov. 1982)
"The Twisted Powers"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #53, Feb. 1, 1946
(*Shazam! #17*, Mar.-Apr. 1975)
"Captain Marvel Gets Promoted"—7 pgs.
(*Shazam! #15*, Nov.-Dec. 1974)
"The Incredible Calculator"—8 pgs.
(*Limited Collector's Edition #C-27*, 1974)
"Uncle Marvel's Rival"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #55, Mar. 1, 1946
(*Shazam! #1*, Feb. 1973)
"The Endless String"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #57, Mar. 29, 1946
(*Shazam! #17*, Mar.-Apr. 1975)
"The Haunted Girl"—12 pgs.
(*Shazam! #14*, Sept.-Oct. 1974)
"The Prophetic Book"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #59, Apr. 26, 1946
(*Shazam! #12*, May-June 1974)
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"Uncle Marvel's Wedding"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #67, Nov. 1946
(*Shazam! #13*, July-Aug. 1974)
"Captain Marvel Gets a Secretary"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #68, Dec. 1946
(*Limited Collector's Edition #C-21*, 1973)
"The Missing Red Suit"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #69, Feb. 1947
(*Limited Collector's Edition #C-34*, Feb.-Mar. 1975)
"Billy Batson's Xmas"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #71, Apr. 1947
(*Shazam! #8*, Dec. 1973)
"Adventure in Time"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #79, Dec. 1947
(*Shazam! #13*, July-Aug. 1974)
"The Ancient Crime"—8 pgs.
(*Shazam! #8*, Dec. 1973)
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"The Talking Tiger"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #80, Jan. 1948
(*Shazam! #8*, Dec. 1973)
"A Twice-Told Tale"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #82, Mar. 1948
(*Shazam! #8*, Dec. 1973)
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)
"The Return of Mr. Tawny"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #89, Oct. 1948
(*Adventure Comics #494*, Dec. 1982)
"Captain Marvel Faces Fear"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #91, Dec. 1948
(*Adventure Comics #501*, July 1983)
"The Chameleon Stone"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #97, June 1949
(*Shazam! #4*, July 1973)
"The Ownerless Diamond"—6 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #100, Sept. 1949
(*Limited Collector's Edition #C-35*, Apr.-May. 1975)
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)

THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

(A Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics, 1982)
 "The Plot Against the Universe"—32 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #102, Nov. 1949
 (Shazam! #14, Sept.-Oct. 1974)
 "The Magic Mix-Up"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #103, Dec. 1949
 (Shazam! #16, Jan.-Feb. 1975)
 "The Invention Miser"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #115, Dec. 1950
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-21, 1973)
 "Mr. Tawny's Personality Peril"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #119, Apr. 1951
 (Shazam! #13, July-Aug. 1974)
 "Mr. Tawny's Sales Campaign"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #121, June 1951
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-27, 1974)
 "Mr. Tawny's Diet Dangers"—9 pgs.
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-21, 1973)
 "Sivana's Time Trap"—10 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #122, July 1951
 (DC Special #18, Oct.-Nov. 1975)
 "The Atomic Fire"—11 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #125, Oct. 1951
 (Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies, 1977)
 "The Return of the Ancient Villains"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #126, Nov. 1951
 (Shazam! #14, Sept.-Oct. 1974)
 "Mr. Tawny's Fight for Fame"—6 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #127, Dec. 1951
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-27, 1974)
 "Sivana's Voodoo Curse"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #129, Feb. 1952
 (Shazam! #17, Mar.-Apr. 1975)
 "Curse of the Black Thumb"—7 pgs.
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-27, 1974)
 "Sivana's Voodoo Curse"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #130, Mar. 1952
 (Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies, 1977)
 "Double Doom"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #133, June 1952
 (Shazam! #13, July-Aug. 1974)
 "A New Home for Billy"—6 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #134, July 1952
 (Shazam! #15, Nov.-Dec. 1974)
 "Mr. Tawny's Bouncing Shoes"—5 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #137, Oct. 1952
 (Shazam! #16, Jan.-Feb. 1975)
 "King Kull and the Seven Sins"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #138, Nov. 1952
 (Adventure #498, Apr. 1983)
 "The World's Maddest Ghost"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #139, Dec. 1952
 (Shazam! #2, Apr. 1973)
 "Captain Marvel Fights Niatpac Levram"—6 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #141, Feb. 1953
 (Adventure Comics #495, Jan. 1983)
 "The Man Without a World"—5 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #143, Apr. 1953
 (Adventure Comics #502, Aug. 1983)
 "The Human Hawks"—6 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #145, June 1953
 (Shazam! #21, Nov.-Dec. 1975)
 "World of Giant Rats"—10 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #148, Sept. 1953
 (Limited Collector's Edition #C-35, Apr.-May 1975)
 "Captain Marvel Battles the World"
 (Shazam! #24, Spring 1976)
 "Sivana Saves Captain Marvel"—10 pgs.

Captain Marvel Adventures #149, Oct. 1953
 (Shazam! #22, Jan.-Feb. 1976)
 "Captain Marvel's Most Difficult Task"—10 pgs.

One of the numerous Golden Age Captain Marvel reprints—here from SHAZAM! #8.



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THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

Captain Marvel Adventures #150, Nov. 1953

(*Shazam!* #17, Mar.-Apr. 1975)

"Captain Marvel's Wedding"—9 pgs.

Marvel Family #22, Apr. 1948

(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-27, 1974)

"The Mistake of Father Time"—6 pgs.

Marvel Family #41, Nov. 1949

(*Shazam!* #17, Mar.-Apr. 1975)

"Captain Marvel Sails Before the Mast"—8 pgs.

Marvel Family #50, Aug. 1950

(*Shazam!* #15, Nov.-Dec. 1974)

"Sivana's Good Inventions"—8 pgs.

Marvel Family #53, Nov. 1950

(*Shazam!* #16, Jan.-Feb. 1975)

"The World Hater"—8 pgs.

Special Edition Comics #1, 1940

(*Flashback* #2, 1973)

"Captain Marvel and the Haunted House"—19 pgs.

"Gamblers of Death"—9 pgs.

["The Menace of Dr. Allirog"]—17 pgs.

"Sivana the Weather Wizard"—17 pgs.

Whiz Comics #2, Feb. 1940

(*Comic Reprints*, Oklahoma)

(*Famous First Edition* #F-4, Oct.-Nov. 1974)

(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)

(*A Smithsonian Book of Comic-Book Comics*, 1982)

"Introducing Captain Marvel"—13 pgs.

Whiz Comics #7, Aug. 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The North Pole Expedition"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #8, Sept. 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Menace of the Skull"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #9, Oct. 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Fantastic Crimes of Dr. Durgan"]—12 pgs.

Whiz Comics #10, Nov. 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Sivana's Daughter"]—12 pgs.

Whiz Comics #11, Dec. 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Mystery of Marvel College"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #12, Dec. 27, 1940

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Gnatzi Warning"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #13, Jan. 24, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Sivana's Fountain of Youth"]—12 pgs.

Whiz Comics #14, Feb. 21, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Sivana's Ghostly Power"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #15, Mar. 21, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-39, Oct.-Nov. 1975)

(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)

["The Origin of Dr. Sivana"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #16, Apr. 18, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Captain Marvel Battles Spy Smasher"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #17, May 16, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Threat to Sterling Morris"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #18, June 13, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Awakening of Spy Smasher"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #19, July 11, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Black Magician"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #20, Aug. 8, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["Crusher of Crime"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #21, Sept. 5, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Vengeful Four"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #22, Oct. 3, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Temple of Itzalotlahui"]—11 pgs.

Whiz Comics #23, Oct. 31, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Bal Masque"]—15 pgs.

Whiz Comics #24, Nov. 28, 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Secret of the Ring"]—15 pgs.

Whiz Comics #25, Dec. 1941

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, 1977)

["The Origin of Captain Marvel, Jr."]—16 pgs.

Whiz Comics #26, Jan. 23, 1942

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Amazing Trip into Time"]—15 pgs.

Whiz Comics #27, Feb. 20, 1942

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Redskin Riddle"]—15 pgs.

Whiz Comics #28, Mar. 20, 1942

(*Special Edition Series* #1, 1974)

["The Dervish of Ank-Har"]—15 pgs.



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COMICS IN REVIEW

R.A. Jones on Pressbutton #1, Conquerer of the Barren Earth #1, Nexus #7, Gargoyle #1, Bloody Bones and Blackeyed Peas #1, and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #1

EAGER CLEAVER

PRESSBUTTON #1
written by PEDRO HENRY
illustrated by STEVE DILLON
colored by LES DORSCHIED
edited by DEF SKINN
Eclipse Comics
\$1.50

There is something terribly wrong with this book: They put the wrong title on it. Forget Axel Pressbutton—he's little more than a walking talking meat cleaver with an aversion to plants. The star of this book is a lady named Mysta Mystalis, the Laser Eraser.

Mysta is a hired killer, in the employ of the law enforcement agency of the planet Ormuz. She has rather a unique origin in that she has no father or mother, having been cloned from the tissue of a barbarian warrior queen who had been killed and encased in molten silver 500 years earlier.

She was raised by a man named Arterius Donthax, leader of the Dondrellian Order of Assassins. It was he who taught her the many ways to kill a man. When Mysta at last decided to leave the Order, there was only one way she could do so—by killing all its other members. She thought she had succeeded in doing so, but Donthax had managed to survive. He tricks Mysta into murdering an Ormuzian official, thus making her the subject of a massive (wo)manhunt. Helping her is her friend, Axel Pressbutton.

Pressbutton is the most recent import from Great Britain. Originally appearing in *Warrior*, the stories



were slated to be presented in America by the now-defunct Pacific Comics. Instead, they are being brought to us through the courtesy

of Eclipse.

They are to be commended for picking up this title (as well as *Rockteer*, the *Groo Special*, and others) and finally bringing it to the light of day. I found it to be one of the more enjoyable of the admittedly small number of British comics I have had occasion to read.

Pedro Henry writes a fast paced and intriguing story, with a diverse and interesting cast of characters, with one notable exception—Axel Pressbutton himself. He is a man who was infected with Vegan Green Rot, with the result that most of his body had to be replaced with mechanical parts. He comes across as a dull, crude, rather slow-witted killing machine whose sole virtue seems to be his loyalty to Mysta.

And it is the lady who completely steals the show in this first issue, upstaging Pressbutton at every turn. She is attractive, skillful, strong and quick thinking. One has little doubt that she is capable of successfully completing any task she sets her herself. She has the makings of a champ.

The art, by Steve Dillon, is excellent. There are moments when Dillon's style bears some resemblance to that of John Severin—and by my standards that is praiseworthy. His layouts and storytelling ability are well developed and should gain him many new fans on this side of the ocean. The art is enhanced by the variations of tone supplied by colorist Les Dorscheid, who firmly established his credentials with his work on *Nexus*.

The book ends with a delightful four-page story starring "Zirk: Silver Sweater of the Spaceways." It's a little hard to describe Zirk, but perhaps this will suffice: Take an animated watermelon, give it a tiny

PEOPLE ARE TALKING!

JUDGE DREDD



DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS INTERVIEW

MORE INTERVIEWS THAN ANY OTHER MAGAZINE!

HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

British artist BRIAN BOLLAND is "totally hot" on two continents for his work on JUDGE DREDD and CAMELOT 3000.

In an exclusive interview in this month's issue of COMICS INTERVIEW, Brian bares his soul and spills his guts, telling why he's been accused of being racist--not to mention sexist. How his first DREDD story was judged too violent. And why he's outraged at just how far FRANK MILLER has pushed the comics medium.

Find out why the BATMAN VS JUDGE DREDD comic by ALAN MOORE & BRIAN BOLLAND has been brought to a halt--and how YOU can help make it a reality!

Of course, there's a whole heck of a lot more in COMICS INTERVIEW #19, including our usual internationally-acclaimed array of far-ranging interviews with surprising folks in all walks of comics life.

But we think the big news this time around is our fascinating JUDGE DREDD feature. It has been said that DREDD is "the top or second best selling non-Marvel or DC direct sale title," so look for this issue of INTERVIEW to sell fast!

#19 ON SALE
FEBRUARY!



THE SOUND OF THUNDER!

It's no secret that the long-awaited first issue of WALLY WOOD'S T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS sold like wild--and no wonder!

With such top comics talents as Teen Titans artist GEORGE PEREZ, Legion of Super-Heroes alumnus KEITH GIFFEN, and X-Men artist DAVE COCKRUM drawing all-new series for the revival of this classic title, there's a LOT of fan interest focused on T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS.

#20 ON SALE
MARCH!



That's why we've talked to the superstar artists behind the AGENTS to get the full story of this exciting new series (and found out more than a few other items of interest along the way--from news of the NIGHT-CRAWLER mini-series to the latest adventures of the AMBUSH BUG!)

Of course, we're well known for providing a clever balance for fans of ALL types, and each issue is just packed with one interview after another on EVERY subject under the comics sun! This issue also sports an original KEITH GIFFEN cover!

COMICS INTERVIEW #20 fills the demand for more information about T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS and should be displayed side-by-side with the comic book for more sales!

wally wood's THUNDER AGENTS



DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS INTERVIEW

MORE INTERVIEWS THAN ANY OTHER MAGAZINE!

tail and flipper-like "arms," the feet of a midget elephant and the brain of the Marquis de Sade—and there you have Zirk, planetary pervers. I think he's my new idol.

The art for this little vignette is provided by Brian Bolland, who just happens to be one of the finest pencilers in comics—an opinion I'm sure is echoed by any of the oldtimers in the audience who still cling to vague memories of the last issue of *Camelot 3000* to see print.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and I think you will too. Now let's just get together and see if we can't get rid of the bald bozo who claims to be the star of the title, and give it to the person who really deserves top billing—Mysta Mystralis (and her faithful companion Zirk!).

DIRT POOR

CONQUERER OF THE BARREN EARTH

written by GARY COHN
illustrated by RON RANDALL

colored by BOB LeROSE
edited by ROSS ANDRU

DC Comics
75¢

The *Barren Earth* has run for quite some time as a back-up feature in the pages of *The Warlord*. The creators, naturally enough, desired more than the few pages available to them in that title. Thus they were given the opportunity to present full-length stories in this mini-series which, if successful, will undoubtedly become the basis for an on-going book.

Those readers who have not followed the series in the past may be somewhat at a loss here, but enough background information is given to fill in most of the gaps. When Earth's sun cooled and expanded, it blasted the planet into little more than a wasteland. Life still exists there, but often in forms vastly different than those with which we are familiar.

Some Earthlings escaped to outer space and began life anew. Thousands of years later, they sent a ship back to explore and possibly reclaim the homeworld. That ship was attacked and destroyed by the Qlov, their ages-old enemy. Only one member of the human crew still survives—a woman named Jinal.

Jinal, hoping to prevent the Qlov from taking over the Earth, sought



the assistance of a mysterious group of powerful beings known as the Old Ones of D'Ro. When her petition was refused, she decided to attempt to conquer Earth herself; to overthrow the Old Ones and use their power to defeat the Qlov.

It is a rather lackluster story; one which traces its roots back at least as far as Edgar Rice Burroughs, yet fails to capture the magic of those bygone tales. The characters are only roughly defined, with none of them sufficiently strong to really grab your attention. The dialogue is adequate, but in no way exceptional. The plot moves from one event to the next so haphazardly that no real dramatic effect is ever achieved, let alone maintained.

The graphics are equally disappointing. Ron Randall has exhibited little growth as an artist since he began this strip. He too often displays a simplicity of style and detail that borders on being amateurish. Many of his figures appear to be stiff and posed, bearing a generic, fixed facial expression.

Further damage is done by the new printing process which has been so highly touted. If you look closely at the art in a standard pulp comic, you will be able to see that the secondary colors are achieved through the use of hundreds of small dots. Normally, this is barely noticeable. In *Barren Earth*, however, the dots are so sharply discernable that they practically leap off the page at you. After a dozen pages, you begin to wonder why spots are beginning to appear before your eyes. Once you realize what the problem is, you find your-

self more engrossed by the myriad dots than you are by the actual art.

Fans of *Barren Earth* will no doubt wish to follow the continuing adventures of Jinal and her comrades. For those who are experiencing this strip for the first time, I fear that even the mere four issues this series is scheduled to run will seem like three issues too many.

CAPITAL IDEA

NEXUS #7

written by MIKE BARON

illustrated by STEVE RUDE

colored by LES DORSCHIED

edited by RICHARD BRUNING and
RICK OLIVER

First Comics
\$1.75

A collective groan of disappointment went up from fandom when Capital Comics folded. Its end signaled the demise of one of the finest comics on the stands—*Nexus*—and one of the more promising new titles—*Badger*. Even worse, publication ceased just at the moment when these two characters were scheduled to co-star in a multi-part story.

Fortunately, First Comics stepped in to rescue these two books from limbo (just as Eclipse has done with several of the Pacific titles). So it is that, after a forced hiatus of several months, *Nexus* is once again back in print.

Nexus and his friend, Judah Macabee, are stranded on a bizarre, bowl-shaped world. There they make the acquaintance of yet another castaway. He is the *Badger*, a somewhat deranged costumed hero from Earth. He had found himself on the losing end of an argument with an ancient Druid named Ham, who used his magic to exile *Badger* to this alien world.

Badger has gotten along pretty well here—after all, when you're certified fruitcake, one world is pretty much like another. *Nexus* and Judah on the other hand, have no intention of remaining on this inverted planet, and are determined to travel to its center, where they feel certain they will find a means of escape. Having nothing better to do, *Badger* decides to accompany them.

Many obstacles lay in their path,

COMICS IN REVIEW

not the least of which is Tech City, a mechanized metropolis in which one needs sophisticated weaponry in order to survive. There they encounter Crocus, a mechanized "used car dealer" (always promising to throw in a free dinette set with any purchase). Even if they should escape from this ring of fire, their fate is uncertain.

Frankly, the story this time around is not quite so good as many of those which preceded it, and therefore may not create many converts. Those who had already discovered the beauty of *Nexus* will probably be so delighted to have it back once again that they will gladly overlook any deficiencies in this return engagement, confident that the quality of the past will be upheld in subsequent issues. I would tend to agree with them. Mike Baron has proven to be an imaginative author, not only coming up with some of the most offbeat characters and concepts you'll ever see, but also being able to make them work. He has a flair for crisp dialogue and he has created a classic character in Badger, a looney-tunes brawler who can be bought off with the promise of a cookie.

Steve Rude continues to impress with his artistic talent. His is an

incredibly smooth style, richly shaded in solid tones that form a pleasing contrast of light and dark. He is also adept at portraying the entire range of human emotions. Since this review is being based on a photostatic copy, I can only assume that Les Dorscheid's coloring will be as richly textured as it has been in all previous issues.

My major complaint, which long-time readers may anticipate is with the hefty price. I would have been happy to see *Nexus* in the same format as other first titles, for the same price. The publishers, however, felt that *Nexus's* (and *Badger's*) many fans would prefer to see them in their original deluxe format—and they may well be right.

At any rate, it is good to have this book back in production. Before it went into hiatus, it was riding high on my list of best titles. I fully expect for it to return there in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, we can also look forward to the return of *Badger*—after all, being a psychopath doesn't necessarily make him a bad person.

MEMORIES CAN KILL

GARGOYLE #1

written by J.M. DeMATTEIS
illustrated by MARK BADGER
edited by CARL POTTS
Marvel Comics
75¢

Isaac Christians was a 78-year-old man who had been dead inside for 60 of those years. This didn't seem to bother him; but when the town his father founded also began to die, he was moved to action. In an effort to save the town, he summoned forth a demon to save him. As demons are wont to do, the tables were turned and Christians became a tool of the nether being. The man was transformed into a hideous Gargoyle who first battled, then joined, the superhero team known as the Defenders.

The Gargoyle has now been made the subject of Marvel's latest limited series. In this first installment, he returns to Christiansboro, which, for all his efforts, is nothing more than a ghost town. "Ghost" is the operative word here, for it is a tale of ghosts—most of whom inhabit Isaac Christians's mind.

A large portion of the story is told in flashback. A certain amount of this is simply the re-hashing necessary to familiarize new readers with the character. A great deal of it, though, gives new information and new insights into the life and personality of Isaac Christians.

The Gargoyle is presented much more effectively here than he has been in most of his appearances with the Defenders—in which, all too often, he seems to be little more than a scaly version of "Father Knows Best," dispensing the wisdom we mistakenly believe to accrue with age. In this issue he has much more depth as a character, and is treated as a formidable protagonist rather than as Grandpa Walton.

To be certain, there are weaknesses—most of them stemming from the script of J.M. DeMatteis. As in all his writing for Marvel, DeMatteis has displayed an oft-times annoying tendency toward preachiness, as if he did his writing from a pulpit. He shows little restraint, lading out his moral pronouncements in copious overabundance—most of which translate to little more than "good is nice and evil is bad." Hardly a philosophic revelation of Platonic proportions.

The saving strength of this first issue comes in the effective use of mood and the intriguing climax. For capturing that mood, large credit must go to the penciller, Mark Badger. In style and execution, his art bears some resemblance to that of Walt Simonson. This is not entirely or always good, but on the whole he has done an excellent job. He exhibits much strength in the use of light and shadow—an ability that is a requisite in any story grounded in the horror genre. Badger is definitely an up-and-comer.

The story succeeds well enough, provides enough of a hook, that it appears it will be worth the investment in time and money necessary to follow it through to its conclusion.

BLOODY BORE

BLOODY BONES AND
BLACKEYED PEAS #1
various writers and artists



edited by **BRENDA TURNER**
Galaxy Comics
\$1.75

The newest entrant into the field of alternative comics publishers, Galaxy Comics, has just released its first book: *Bloody Bones and Blackeyed Peas*. It is this the best they can offer. I doubt the other publishers will be quaking with fear.

Neither will you, after reading this anthology title—which would be fine if it was a romance book. Unfortunately, it is intended to present horror stories. The only thing horrifying about this first issue is the price you have to pay for it.

The first story, scripted by Linda Turner and Mike Murray, is little more than a frontispiece intended to introduce the title characters of the book, who will serve as the hosts in future stories. I have little use for this narrative device in horror comics—what little value it had after EC Comics got through with it was destroyed by the Warren magazines of a decade later (and by the Charlton horror titles, and the DC horror titles, and the Marvel horror titles, and...).

I presume that, like most such "hosts," these two characters will be used for comic relief. If so, this first story gives no indication of it. It is a grim and rather listless tale of accidental and deliberate murders. It has no true climax or ending, merely fading away after running entirely too long. The dialogue is disjointed and lacking in any real sense of smooth pacing.

The art—by Ben Dunn, Murray, and Pat Boyette—is on a rather amateurish level. Furthermore, it is sabotaged by the worst coloring job I have ever seen in a comic. I have seen enough of Dunn's work to know that he has improved greatly since this story was pencilled, and I was given a perfectly valid explanation for the foul-up in the coloring process. Unfortunately, neither point has any relevance in this review. I have to judge the product as it is—not as it could have been or will be. Artistically, it's a complete mess.

Rounding out the issue is a nine-pager by veteran craftsman Pat Boyette. While Pat has never entered the upper echelon in my ranking of artists, he is capable of very fine work on occasion. (An example can be seen in the illustration he supplied for the advertisement running on the back cover of this very issue.)

Here, his artwork is certainly competent, but in no way outstanding. The story, while better scripted than the first, is so predictable that anyone who can't guess the ending four pages into the thing should restrict their reading to the backs of cereal boxes.

Galaxy Comics has several projects planned for the future which certainly have a great deal of potential, but if they don't correct the flaws inflicting this premiere offering, the new kid on the block may find itself looking for a different neighborhood—one in the low-rent district.

BLUNDER AGENTS

WALLY WOOD'S
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS
 various writers and artists
 colored by **PATY COCKRUM**
 edited by **NEIL A. HANSEN**
Deluxe Comics
\$2.00

Probably the most newsworthy aspect of this new title is the legal struggle going on over who really owns the rights to these characters. That'll say on the subject, for the simple reason that it doesn't have a damn thing to do with judging the artistic merits of this book.

And the book does have some merit, beginning and ending with the beautiful front and back cover illustrations by George Perez. The opening story stars the agent known as the Raven (I am eschewing any explanation as to who and what the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents are, working on the assumption that most of you have had at least some previous exposure to them.) Written by Dann Thomas, it is an ordinary yet reasonably enjoyable tale of international terrorism. The art is first rate, with George Perez's pencils being excellently embellished by Dave Cockrum on inks.

The following story—starring Mentor, and scripted by Steve Perry—is certainly the most intriguing of the book's offerings, dealing as it does with mind control. Unfortunately for Steve, his story is nearly ruined by Keith Giffen, whose art was degenerated to the point of being little more than caricature.

The final story, the longest in the book, stars all the T.H.U.N.D.E.R.



1984 Deluxe Comics

Agents. What was obviously intended as the issue's primary offering turns out to be its biggest disappointment. Surprisingly, it is scripted by Steve Englehart, one of the finest writers to ever work in comics. Here however, he can manage no more than a pedestrian story, with the worst dialogue I've ever seen come from his type-writer. The art, by Dave Cockrum, is not bad, but continues to enforce the belief that his is for some reason unable to recapture the artistic excellence he displayed when he helped rejuvenate the Legion of Super-Heroes more than a decade ago.

As you can tell, the book is certainly not an abomination, and in fact has fine moments. (For me, one of the finest was the pin-up page drawn by Stan Drake, one of the best comic strip artists of the modern era.) It treads no new ground, however, and in large part fails to generate the excitement of the original books from the '60s. There is nothing here that will induce me to buy the second issue.

(Aside to the editors, regarding your "tribute page" to Wally Wood: while I yield to no one in my admiration for the man's work, don't you think it would have been appropriate to also give some credit to penciller Steve Ditko for the "power of the scene" you chose to reprint?) ●

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DESTROYED TERRA
DID YOU SEE THAT
ONE?



DID I?
I THOUGHT
IT WAS HORRIFY
ING! NOT ENOUGH
PSYCHOLOGICAL
DEPTH FOR MY
TASTE, HOWEVER.

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YOU'RE DEAD! I ATTENDED YOUR
FUNERAL! THIS CAN'T BE
HAPPENING!



YOU WON'T ESCAPE
THIS TIME, LADY!



YOU'RE
JUST
A KID!

YOU CAN'T
BE A DAY
OVER
SEVENTEEN!

SATIRE⁷

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WORK IT
OUT!



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AMAZING READERS

N. WAGNER
Acton, Ontario

Simonson Fan

Do you guys think you could do an interview with Walt Simonson?

I think he's the best in the business today and that he hasn't gotten enough exposure. I mean, he was good before *Thor*, wasn't he?

Well, think about it.

★ In a way I have. Although an interview with Simonson is more the territory of *The Comics Journal*. I've thought about mixing the hero-histories with surveys of what books certain writers and artists have contributed to down through the years. Candidates for articles would be Simonson, of course, Brian Bolland, Frank Robbins, Bernie Wrightson, and a whole host of others and cast of thousands. But that's only if the collective you, the readers, would be interested.

I'm listening, but are you writing?
—Art

RANDY L. WATTS
Pacoma, CA

Patience, Mr. Jones!

This is of course concerning the review you had of the Kitty Pryde-Wolverine mini-series. What the hell is with you, Mr. Jones? Jumping to conclusions or what? You complain that there is not enough Wolverine in the series. Well, in case you did not notice, the name Kitty Pryde comes before Wolverine, so of course it's going to have more to do with her than him. You also must learn to be a little more patient; after all, the series is 6 issues long and that was only the first one. As you know by now, Wolverine was the lead character in issue number three, and I'm sure he will be the star of an issue or two more before the conclusion.

But I must admit, the rest of your review was very good. You were right when you said how well Kitty was portrayed. I must agree it's

about time she was shown as a teenage girl instead of the usual totally-in-command type of person. I know, I'd be pretty damn scared in a foreign country like that.

Well, that's about it. Now don't get me wrong, R.A. I really do enjoy your reviews even if I don't agree with them. Oh, and by the way, didn't you just love that last exciting (Yawn) issue of *Secret Wars*?

★ Claremont once mentioned to me, Randy, that he would be perfectly happy writing a mini-series about Kitty coping with boys, going to school, learning how to think and to deal with her changing body, etc., just like millions of normal girls born in the U.S.A. and living in pink houses, but he didn't think the idea was very feasible. He was right, of course, but like yourself, I noticed that he managed to insert his ideas about Kitty's character and overall state of mind into the early issues, lifting the entire story above the mire of most comics.

—Art

RABID ALIEN BITE
New Britain, CT

Gremlins!

Forgive me if I seem upset, but I think someone's fooling around with my mail. They intercept it en route and do funny things to it, so that my letters look strange when you publish them. They switched the chronological order (I wrote the one in *AMAZING HEROES* #58 before the one in #56) so that it seems I have no willpower and must read grating titles even after I claim to have dropped them. That feeling seems implicit in your reply to me in #58, assuming you had the other letter in mind. I'm certainly more discerning than that, as the people at Westfield Comics can attest from my orders. I am by no means a "Marvel man." My tastes run across several publishers, with DC being in the majority. So give me a little credit.

Another thing the vandals are doing is mutilating my name. For the

record, I am David Alan Wright, not Allen or Allan. They've even infiltrated DC, too: I recently received a subscription refund addressed to David Alan Write. I hope someone catches these people. There's no telling what they'll do next.

★ Get serious, *Rabid/Dave*. You should know by now that we Managing Editors, as a species, are very quixotic and reserve the right to publish letters in the order we see fit. Also, we tend to copyedit many of them for length and clarity. Most people write letters to magazines or newspapers in the heat of the moment and don't really think about what they did last week.

The same is true when letter columns are put together, *Rabid/Dave*, even in the professional (as it were) comics.

I'm glad to see that your comic tastes cut across the brand-name spectrum, but have you read any Dostoyevsky lately?

—Art

KEN LOO
Edmonton, Alberta

Irked by Marvel Addicts

It's been a while since I last wrote a "LOC" to any publication, so I hope you'll pardon any grammatical errors that occur. I'm writing in regards to Robert Boyd's letter in issue #57. The thing that's puzzling me is your response to his letter. It sounded somewhat cynical, and I'm not totally sure whether you agree with Mr. Boyd's remarks or not.

My opinion on Capital's demise is somewhat similar to Mr. Boyd's. I feel strongly that the so called Marvel addicts brought about Capital's suspension. However, I also agree with your remark that "comic fans decide for themselves what is good and what is bad."

While I really enjoy your "Top 100 Survey," it really irks me knowing that so many readers are buying trash like *Secret Wars* while totally ignoring a real quality book like the *Saga of the Swamp Thing*. I know this is a rhetorical question,



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C'MON!
LET'S GET 'EM!



John Jacobs

"...here comes Doctor Peculiar, the muscle-bound Übermensch doing battle with malevolent Vegeton, monster from outer space. In Dr. P's train are such illustrious (and profusely illustrated) super-pals as Lady X, The Purple Unicorn ("Baltimore's Greatest Hero"), The Bronze Bruin, The Turkey (from Arlington, no less), Dinosaur Man, The Black Vulture of the Andes, The Red Octopus of the USSR, Muffy Brandon the well-endowed space explorer, and ... oh yes! Julie Winsome, medical detective. The entire cast is in mortal combat with a spaced-out rogues' gallery of ghouls, goblins, golems, dybbuks and djinn from somewhere out there...

Check them all out in the first issue of Doctor Peculiar, one of the most bizarre comic books you'll ever see. Comics fans are picking it up in select stores now, right next to the premier edition of *Far Frontier*. The latter comic book features Mabonga, fearless princess of the jungle, Astroman, Wolf Angel, Moon Raider, Mars Maid. And all sorts and conditions of monsters.

Both comic books are dated 1983 on their four-color covers, but they've just been published by Madison Comics. They sell for \$2 each. Interior pages are black and white. In the tradition of the underground comics of the 60s and the old-time comic strip collections of the 30s.

John Jacobs works closely with such artists as Ken Landgraf (of New York), Willie L. Peppers, and John Jeff Potter, Landgraf, who apprenticed under the tutelage of the late great cartoonist Wallace Wood, prepared the finished art panels for the first two comic books.

He is running ads in such organs as *Comic Buyers Guide*, a weekly paper. So watch out. From J.J., you can expect almost anything."

WILLIAM F. RYAN

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bizarre... and
both are more
than a little
bit... scary."

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A MALE CHAUVINIST PLANT!

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ACTIVATED, SIR!



WILLIE GOES INTO ACTION.



RIGHT ON!
HERE COMES
THE EBONY
ANGEL!

GO TO IT!

SUDDENLY, THE PRAIRIE
CHICKEN REVEALS HIMSELF!

GOING SOMEWHERE,
IGUANA MAN?



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but why can't all these Marvel addicts just give up one of their beloved titles and give Swampy a try?

As you've probably guessed, I don't have a high opinion of Marvel. In the last year, I've dropped almost every Marvel title that I used to read. The only exceptions are *Spider-Man*, *Thor*, *Dr. Strange*, the *Epic Line* of comics, and any mini-series that are not based on toys. These are the only titles being produced by Marvel that I feel are of any quality.

I'm not trying to preach to people what they should or shouldn't read, but what I'm trying to say is evaluate what you're reading once in a while. Especially for all you Marvel supporters: give DC and the alternatives a try.

Titles like *Swamp Thing*, *Jon Sable*, *American Flag!*, *The Badger*, and *Eclipse Monthly* are really worthy of your attention. Some of the finest work in comics today exists in these titles, but because you Marvel supporters spend your money on *X-Men* and *Secret Wars*, you'll never discover this for yourselves.

I would like to conclude this letter with a few comments on your publication. I still believe it's the best fanzine in print today, however I do have a few qualms. My main gripe is with your "News-lashes" section; the problem being is that it's way too short.

I know with the departure of the *Star Wars* strip, you folks are still trying to decide what to do with the extra space. My suggestion is, use it to expand your news section. I really was upset over the skimpy coverage you gave DC in issues #55 and #57. Come to think of it, I don't believe there was any coverage of DC in #55. However, if you don't follow my suggestion, whatever you do, don't use the extra space for reprinting another strip.

Besides this minor gripe, I think your fanzine's the best and hope you continue your great effort.

★ Ah, ken, but you notice, when you add up the number of Marvel titles that you do happen to like, that comes up to a fairly high amount. You can't judge an entire line by its worst product, just as you can't judge a writer by his worst story.

I don't believe Marvel has snowed younger readers into not checking out titles by other publishers with its incessant, nonsensical hype. Kids—as I recall from the days when I was one—tend to

shut themselves off from reading (or visual) experiences that appear to be different from what they're already getting. Thus, it's in Marvel's commercial self-interest not to make too many titles seem radically different from one another.

Most of these young readers will outgrow comics, and just in time, as far as I'm concerned. Others will find themselves hungering for new and different experiences in the medium. And, just as older readers graduated from DC to Marvel 20 years ago, they will discover the better books published by First, DC, Fantagraphics, et al. —Art

MIKE EVANS
Albuquerque, NM

Finally Did It

Well, you finally got me to do it.

Usually I only buy issues of **AMAZING HEROES** that I had specific interest in. As time went by, I found this to be practically every one, and as my local comic shop tends to run out of issues not reserved, that means I've had to reserve every one.

As long as I'm now a regular reader I thought I'd throw in my two cents about what works and doesn't work for me in **AH**.

Probably the best article to date is the Mike Barr/Denny O'Neil dialogue on the *Batman*. It was fascinating reading and would be fun to see more of this type of various characters.

The previews also come across well and have alerted me to such finds as *Mr. X* and *The Elementals*. They also save me some money; I can see where a lot of people would like *Starstruck* but it has no appeal to me.

Other fun stuff: "News-lashes," Silly Covers, "Top 100," and Hero Histories. The covers themselves



Illustration by BRUCE TIMM, character © DC Comics, Inc.

AMAZING READERS

are usually a visual treat.

Wasted print department: "Coming Comics" are always behind what's actually on the newsstands, and as such I really can't see using up four to five pages of valuable space. The comic strips (Star Wars/Star Hawks or their replacements) also wouldn't be missed; let's see more interviews in these places.

I really don't like the tone of the reviews lately. This R.A. Jones guy is getting way too caustic with his negative reviews. I'm no great fan of *The Transformers* or *The Fly*, but comments like "...never expected to see any comic drawn by Frank Springer that would compel me to say that the art is better than the story" and "any story that includes the sound effect 'ARRR-ROOMBAZOOM' is fit for nothing more than fertilizing your flower bed" I can do without. Maybe if he stuck to reviewing comics he liked, we'd all be better off and he could keep his hatchet sharp for something else.

Again, thanks for an overall entertaining magazine.

★ If you read as many comics as R.A. did, Mike, you'd probably be caustic too. It doesn't help readers, by the way, if a reviewer sticks only to books he likes. Contrast is a necessity, so the reader can judge for himself if this is a critic whose taste seems to reflect his. —Art

MIKE SANTIACOMO
Pottstown, PA

Embarrassing Variations

One of the most irritating things about being an older comic book collector is the automatic association non-comic readers make with comic books and other embarrassing variations of the medium.

I'm constantly amazed that people actually believe that Batman television series reflects comic reality, or that those God-awful Saturday morning *Superfriends* cartoon shows are typical of comic fare.

Recently I found something that made me feel better about superheroes in the video medium. I got, after years of searching, copies of the early 1940s Superman cartoons produced by the Max Fleischer studios. I had seen a few of them

about 25 years ago when I was a child and was very impressed. Since then I have wondered if the cartoons were as good as I thought, or if I was just young and impressionable.

Well, they are as good as I remembered. The skill that went into the crafting of the cartoons would put anything made in the past 20 years to shame. Superman looks and acts like Superman. His origin and powers are consistent with the comics of the early years, which is more than I can say about any of the Superman movies.

The plots are admittedly simple, but effective. Again, the plots of the cartoons are easily as good as the plots of the early comics (admit it, those '40s plots weren't exactly Marv Wolfman quality.)

If anyone gets a chance to view the early, pioneering Superman cartoons I think they'd agree that the modern versions just don't measure up.

★ I agree with you about the high quality of Fleischer's Superman cartoons, Mike. Do you remember that old Superman story that was reprinted several years ago, when Clark took Lois to a movie that happened to be showing one of the cartoons? His dilemma there was to distract Lois everytime Clark was about to change to Superman on the screen!

I must differ with you on one matter, though. The Batman television series seems to me to accurately reflect the comic book reality of the script in the '50s and early '60s. It might be too camp for modern tastes (it still amuses me occasionally), but I think Lorenzo Semple and the other writers, overall, did a pretty good job.

Sure, it wasn't Art, but neither are most comic books. —Art

TOM LONG
Edwardsville, IL

War of Words

For several months now, we fans have witnessed a war of words between Marvel and DC over what actually happened to the proposed *Justice League/Avengers* crossover. Editorials and innuendos are thrust and parried monthly, but let's not forget the basic fact: this story will probably never be seen. When the death of a project gains more at-

tention than the actual story it says quite a bit about the state of comic politics today. I see it as a rather harsh commentary in which the only real losers are the fans. It's too bad the two major comic companies haven't found maturity (this directed more toward Marvel than DC) to weed out the trash they are currently publishing instead of creating unnecessary controversy over a project that probably wouldn't have been that good anyway. Directly, Marvel is no longer quality consistent; and I find my respect for their rampant sales-figure scheduling nil. I truly wish someone would tell them that *more* is not always better.

Today I read with sad regard the financial crunch Pacific Comics found themselves in. Along with Capital and Charlton (and how many other in past few years?), the suspension of Pacific's line comes as quite a blow to fans who are eager for comics other than mainstream ones. I take solace in the efforts by First, Eclipse, and some others who managed to hang on. It's sad that the current monopolies have so little regard for professional competition. True, it's a free marketplace, but the comics industry could withstand some unity for the good of all...before this current "renaissance" falls by the wayside and we're left only with products like *The Secret Wars*.

If it seems like I have come down hard on Marvel during the course of this letter, it is because of the obvious lessening in quality they have shown over the last few years. Once you could count on Marvel to be the best, now you have to look a lot harder past the small press titles which depend only on quality to root around the bundles of Marvel that could do a lot better.

★ I hate to see publishers go too, Tom, but a few that are no longer with us published poor stories that no amount of production values could compensate for. I know many people who wouldn't have minded paying a few extra shekels for Pacific books, but got tired, rather quickly, of shelling out big clams for weak material.

Marvel can afford to publish hackwork. The firm can even make money at it, so long as its readers don't find themselves too disillusioned.

Smaller firms don't have the luxury of being bad. So far, too many seem to have creators who are just overgrown fans in the worst sense of the word. —Art

SEVEN SAMUROID

BY FRANK BRUNNER

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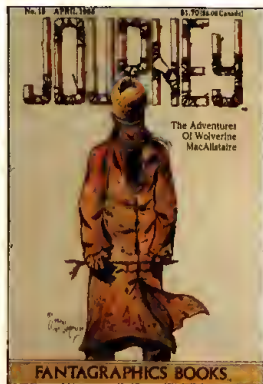


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